Pitcher in Paradise

Arthur A. Bierstead.

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PITCHER IN PARADISE

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SOME RANDOM REMINISCENCES, SPORTING AND OTHERWISE, BY

ARTHUR M. BINSTEAD

OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "PITCHER" OF THE PINK 'UN

LONDON

SANDS & COMPANY

1903

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CHAPTER I.

Introductory—Early journalistic ideals—Shifter and Reginald Shirley Brooks—The Gaiety sociables—"Number One: How to Take Care of Him"—Dr Joseph Pope—The denunciation of Peter Blobbs—The rebellion of Shifter—The splendid philosophy of Little Willie—Shifter writes his first and only burlesque—And acts as a lady's literary adviser—Master and the Christmas cards—The Economist—The artless butler and the lawyer's clerk—Shirley's desperate ruse—The definition of a bribe—Shifter's safe-deposit schemes—A hunt for two hundred—Entering upon a tenancy in Dane's Inn—The possibilities of a chain measure—Wellington Street sized up—How the E Division assisted—A little dinner in Old Bond Street—With rats as *hors d'œuvre*—The rough song of the linnet—A box at the Empire—Lenore—A three-horned dilemma—An awful interruption, and—A tragic ending.

"Two gins an' vermooths, one small Bass, one cream de monnth, a Johnny Walker with a baby soda, an' a cigar for the Duke o' Devonshire!"

The damson-complexioned young man ensconced behind the bar, who appeared to constitute the entire staff of the club, repeated the order word for word and then enquired, somewhat brusquely:

"What price smoke does his grace generally 'ave; threep'ny or fourp'ny?"

"Fourpenny, of course, blast your impudence!" roared the clean-shaven man of forty who, but for his glib oath, would have seemed positively parsonic. "When did you *ever* see his Grace smoke a threep'ny, pray? For the abs'lute ignorance an' inefficiency of its servants, damned if this club don't take the bun of any in London!"

It was at the flunkey's club hard by Old Bond Street where the coachmen, the footmen and the valets of the great foregather in their leisure moments and address each other by their masters' titles; but to me it was nothing less than Mr Tuckle and the Bath greengrocer come to life again; and but for the fact that my friend Phil May has since pictured it all in lifelike black-and-white, I still might take it for a Dickens' nightmare. But the spectacle of these plushites in their little paradise suggested that which I had long and vainly sought—an apt title for another chronicle of cheerful yesterdays, of boon companions in the warm bygone; a second *Pink 'Un and a Pelican.*

Six years have flitted by since that tentative and unpretentious work came off the press, but one searches in vain in the present day for the counterparts of the bright sons of the morning of twenty years ago who figured in its pages. The strictest moralists have shown in fiction that men wild in their youth become virtuous and steady enough in after life; but alas! so many die in their apprenticeship. Lucky is he who lives to say, "*Alea, vina, Venus, tribus his sum factus agenus*"—play, liquor, love, by these was I made poor; for regret is a thing best left to women, whereas the memory of big things achieved keeps sweet for ever.

Ere you honour me by stepping into my Paradise, may I be permitted to remark that, for obvious reasons, the names of some of the personages in this story are fictitious, though many of them will be luminous to the enlightened elect; most of them, however, are real, and all the events recorded are facts.

I am growing old and materialistic now, but in the year that Iroquois won the Derby I was in the exquisitely virginal position of being a journalistic novice with but two living ideals. The first was William Farn Goldberg and the second Reginald Shirley Brooks, better known as 'Shifter' and 'Peter Blobbs,' respectively. In those days the favourite haunt of sporting men, theatrical managers, playwrights and other literary light infantry was the Gaiety Bar, where, upon a large circular seat, in the top lounge, would be found gathered on any afternoon a little clique self-styled the 'Gaiety Sociables,' consisting principally of Bill Holland, Fred Hughes, Harry Ulph, W. T. Purkiss, Mr Cooper who kept the 'Albion,' and a great many others of lesser degree, presided over by Dr Joseph Pope. The dear old doctor was perhaps the greatest mixture of wit, talent, oddity and obstinacy that ever lived, volubly condemning his friends to sherry-and-seltzer while lowering only the best whisky himself; preaching popular hygiene in lecture halls for a couple of hours in the evening and——doing himself right well with his cronies at the Gaiety for most of the remaining twenty-two. His star lecture was entitled "Number One: How to Take Care of Him," and I was not inconsiderably flattered one evening when Shifter and Shirley invited me to join them in visiting a Hall in

Store Street, Tottenham Court Road, ostensibly to listen to a tirade against smoking and drinking, but really to 'jolly' the fine old Jope. Three seats had been reserved for us in the front row facing the platform, on which stood the regulation green cloth-covered table surmounted by the stereotyped crystal water-bottle. At eight o'clock or thereabouts the discussion started, and for a time it looked like being a very yellow sort of evening, but as the back and upper parts of the hall filled up, the doctor warmed up too. Now when he became declamatory, his voice, always husky with good living, grew into a low-pitched roar, and soon after he had struck these tones, he advanced to the rail where the footlights ordinarily are, and fixed his large expressive eyes on Shirley.

"Sitting here in front of me to-night," he cried, "is a young man of wit, refinement, and education, the son of an editor of *Punch* and himself a humorist of no mean order. But what has he done for himself? He has, by the aid of a concoction of tissue paper and Egyptian tobacco-dust (here he held up a cigarette) lowered himself to the level of a gibbering idiot!"

This bold attack drew a thunderous roar of delighted applause from the audience, and Shifter mercilessly humped his back and leant forward, after the familiar manner of the ventriloquist's old man, to stare at poor Shirley, who subsequently killed himself by cigarette smoking, and who by this time was as rosy as a hot lobster. The lecturer turned his penetrating gaze on Shifter, with whom, by the way, he had been lunching all the afternoon.

"Next to a good meal at mid-day," he continued,

"no greater blessing can man crave than the appetite to enjoy it; but the best luncheon or dinner ever put upon a table can be made a curse—a *curse*, I say—by what is drunk before and after it."

Shifter's nose was puckered in playful resentment; otherwise he did not flinch. Much calmer than poor Shirley had been, he gazed up at the doctor and muttered, though not loud enough for the audience to hear, "Four gins-and-bitters, a pint of Beaune, and seven whiskies-and-sodas. All right."

"In the front row of the audience," the relentless Jope went on, "I observe a young man of considerable promise, a man who gained honours at the University of Oxford, a rising journalist and one capable of achieving a high place in the world of letters. But, my friends, he has contracted the detestable and execrable habit of dram-drinking; his body is rapidly becoming soddened with alcohol, and in less than a year he will be one remove lower than the beasts of the field. I tell you——"

But at this point Shifter, perfectly unruffled, arose from his seat, and, gazing first at the lecturer and then at the audience, observed, with truly oriental composure—"A more impertinent impostor than this seemingly amiable old gentleman I have never listened to. If any gentleman wants my seat he can have it: *I* am now about to proceed to the Oxford Music Hall to spend a quiet intellectual evening with Pat Feeney!"

Naturally we slunk out after him; but nothing ever discomposed Little Bill. "He lived like a sportsman and died like a philosopher," was Willie Wilde's observation as he stood at the grave-side at Tonbridge, and a more fitting epitaph will take some finding.

Once he was being driven over that unguarded mountain road which lies between Roquebrune and Mentone, where a twelve-inch swerve of your wheels would land you over the edge of the cliffs and slap into eternity. The driver's two little horses were particularly fresh, and were being brutally slashed along at all of thirteen miles an hour, when Shifter, who had been sitting up till three that morning at Ciro's and wasn't feeling more than fit, stood up and pulled the *cocher* by the coat-tails.

"Without claiming to be better or more reverent than my fellow-men," he observed, "my object in setting out for the *bataille de fleurs* at Mentone was to take my part in the pious observances which usher in the season of Lent. If you land the lot of us in the Mediterranean it's *your* fault, but be good enough to remember that I go into the next world in the cause of the Roman Catholic religion."

Like many another penman of the dilettante school, Willie could see barrels of money in becoming a Gaiety librettist, and his bantling duly came before the footlights; but we had to admit, as we sat in a first-floor front room at the old Mona in Maiden Lane on the morning after the production, that *Dick Turpin the Second* was not going to connect with the coin. The piece was full of bright and witty lines and speeches; but there is something more in the trick of a Gaiety burlesque than all that, and the following day's notices were dishcartening enough to have turned a hungry elephant against his buns.

"Bill," said I to the brave little chap whose love of repartee was so irrepressible that on the well-remembered occasion of a certain charming hostess asking him if he'd seen *Over the Sea with a Sailor*—

(the novel of the moment)—he blurted out, "Not exactly, but I've been Under the Seat with a Welsher, and it's no catch, I assure you!"

"Billie," said I, "cheer up! Overhaul the piece and try it again."

But Willie only shook his head.

"No, Arthur," he answered. "Clearer, less-prejudiced judgments than mine have declared it to be N.G. I don't refer to the papers; they can go and sugar themselves; but, as the curtain went up and Alma Stanley, who is as clever as she's beautiful, saw that the house was packed, she turned to Emmie Broughton and exclaimed, 'My! What a lot of people have stayed away from Carl Rosa's funeral just to come here!'"

Such philosophy as this was beyond all argument. Yet it was just about this time that Willie's opinion of a passionate playlet was solicited by a little lady who has since made a mighty name indeed as an emotional novelist. She had not then trodden the devious path that leads from the boudoir to the book-stalls, and quite possibly she had no literary ambition beyond that which inspired her to stand pat on a bunch of the most stilted and ridiculous mediæval blank verse that ever compositor took off a hook; but Shifter had been named to her as the one Bachelor of Arts in all London who could free her stuff from error's chain, and to him she accordingly sent it. For several weeks it lay in his drawer at the office snowed under, as it were, by an avalanche of writs and summonses, until, on one Saturday morning, the charming little lady called by appointment to fetch it. Now Shifter always was most courteous to the fair sex, and the dainty authoress's first exclamation

on being shown into our front office was one of wonder that any person could produce 'copy' in so noisy and distracting a place. For outside the large window which constitutes our only wall on the northern side, there is the never-ceasing roar of the traffic, the shouts of the newspaper boys, the monotonous ringing of the omnibus bells, and the cries of many costermongers and hawkers. On this particular a.m., a peddler from Houndsditch patrolled the kerb-stone only ten feet below us and kept up a maddening cadence of—"One penny! A new an' amusin' toy; a novelty, likewise a kewrosity. One penny!" Shifter, however, deemed it his duty to assure the fair sister in the craft that not only did the vociferation not hinder us in our work, but that we probably could not get along without it. Virgil, he reminded her (apologising for instituting the comparison) gave us to understand that he was inspired to write his pastoral poetry by the hum of the bees around him, the *lenis susurrus* of all flying things in the air, the drowsy hum of the hedgerow; and though, he said, Virgil probably lied about the bees in his own case—for it was well known that when he wasn't sound asleep in his little back attic he was cribbing bits out of the Odyssey in the Sicilian British Museum—there could be no doubt about his theory being quite right. For as long as he was able Willie fought shy of the subject of the playlet, but the little authoress cornered him at last, and very skilfully and ambiguously did he fence with her. Finally, however, the bolt had to fall.

"So much for the plot, Mr Goldberg," she cried, prettishly; "and now as regards the cast. With your knowledge of our leading actors, to which of them would you entrust the interpretation of 'Rodolpho'?"

Shifter's eye caught mine and caused me to move away, ostensibly to re-post an old copy of *The Spirit of the Times*, as he turned on her with a look as heavily serious as though he were the Literary Adviser to the Thames Ironworks, and observed:

"Well, I should say Joe Elvin!"

But chronic impecuniosity was the badge of all our tribe, as well as the reason why the dark passage and the winding staircase were haunted on publishing days by duns, process-servers, and many species of sheriff's officers, collectively called writters. Threats and rumours of threats swamped the letter-boxes, too.

"There are a lot of Christmas cards come," said Master the prosperous, one Noeltime. "One of you fellows had better review them and give them good notices. Suppose you do them, Shirley."

Peter Blobbs took up a pen and wearily scratched out:

'"The ordinary glut of Christmas cards is once more on us, but we fail to see anything novel, anything original. The notifications of the Westminster County Court are still of the familiar orange-coloured hue; while, as before, Messrs Dod & Longstaffe, the eminent debt-collectors, send their periodical reminders of this and every other quarter on the blue paper which has become——'"

"What the devil's this?" shouted Master. "Messrs Dod & Longstaffe, whoever they may be, have sent nothing to this office."

"Oh, HAVEN'T THEY?" cried the entire staff as one man, arising to go out, while Master, growling out something about having to do his work himself, grabbed up a pen and was left angrily demonstrating that two fat naked little boys and a milk-white dove

flying round a frosted plum-pudding were symbolical of the highest aspirations of the Christian religion.

In those days we had as cashier a dear old Northumbrian who met all applications for "a bit on account" with a moral lecture, but never a flat refusal. One of his cherished apothegms was that, next to the man who strenuously tucked away part of his weekly envelope as a surprise for his landlady, the one who would eventually take the race and connect with the stakes was the one that carried his money in a purse, since the deliberateness of pulling out his wallet and removing the elastic band whenever he thought that one wouldn't hurt him, would give him time to reflect that, after all, he was better without it. Between them Shifter and Shirley kept the old gentleman in a perpetual groan, for whilst the one dropped in with the regularity of a postman each morning, the other daily sent down the man-servant from the private hotel in which he lived (and died) in Bedford Place. There was, it's true, one of these servitors who fairly put the cat amongst the pigeons. He was quite new to the ways of impecunious literary men, and Shirley had ordered him to go down and annex what petty cash the Economist had about him. In due season the fool returned, literally beaming with smiles.

"I couldn't see the old gentleman 'cos he wasn't there, sir," he panted, for he had been running, "but there was two stoutish men, one with a black bag as I could see was a lawyer, and who said, when the clerk in the orfice told 'em as he didn't know where you lived but thought as you'd gone abroad, that he wanted to see you most particular this very day about a big legacy what had been left you; so I

gave 'em your address an' they're on their way up here now!"

Pale and livid with fear and anger, Shirley arose from his bed in his nightshirt, and having 'printed' on a sheet of notepaper this significant notice:

> NO ONE TO ENTER THIS ROOM UNDER ANY PRETEXT UNTIL THE INQUEST HAS BEEN HELD.
>
> *By Order.*
>
> THE CORONER.

he tremblingly affixed it outside the door, and, having locked and bolted himself in and formed a barricade of the furniture, retired to bed again, with the firm intention of remaining there until Master came to town and organised a relief expedition.

In those days of reckless lightheartedness and financial scheming there seldom was a Friday on which one or other of John Corlett's staff was not arrested at the instance of some impatient tradesman, and (though I mercifully refrain from publishing it here) at least one of the publishing clerks still at No. 52 could tell the name of the tipstaff who once dropped in on a Boxing Day, with his hat in his hand and the observation on his lips that, though he had got "several little things" in his pocket he would "say nothink about 'em to-day," since he had merely "called in for his Christmas Box!"

This worthy it was who taught us with what strange significance the Law regards the oyster. I was walking down Fleet Street with Shifter, bound for

Sweeting's on the proposition of 'natives.' On the very threshold of the shop door our friendly tipstaff appeared, seemingly out of the bowels of the earth itself, and laid a detaining hand on Willie's shoulder. It turned out to be a matter of £36, 16s. 8d. or Holloway Castle, and, being always briskly alive to the value of procrastination, I told the writter, as I gently but firmly dragged him into the shop, that we were about to partake of twelve oysters apiece, but were quite prepared—nay, would brook no denial—to make it a quarter of a gross, so that he might join us.

"No no, no oysters for me!" he shouted, grabbing at the door-post and nearly upsetting the free shrimps. "Oysters is a bribe, but—er—there's no harm in half a tankard o' stout!"

But Billie's relish had departed. For the only person in the world from whom he had the least hope of getting the blunt that day—the Old 'Un—was at Newmarket and would not be back till night. Shifter was borne off to a sponging-house in the city, where, for a fee, he was to be kept until four o'clock. And when I went down with the scudi to release him I found him, serene as ever, writing cheery notes-to-queries for the *Pink 'Un*, despite the fact that one of the two grim-visaged gaolers between whom he was sitting had just told him that "if your pal ain't here with the brass before the quarter past, we shall 'ave to see about makin' a start!"

The only occasion on which I remember him being seriously put out by the absence of some money was during the last weeks of his tenancy of some rooms in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden. Here, in an old house long since wiped out by "decay's effacing fingers," he lodged with a young female who, if not exactly of

the type of whose "peevish proud virginity" the Bard of Avon complains, was a lively and pleasant companion—even if she *did* occasionally get up in the night to twist the buttons off Willie's coat so that she might be the better able to prove to him in the morning how indispensable to his welfare she and her little needle really were. Now the sight of any considerable sum of money positively feazed this young woman: the spectacle was probably too rich for her blood. So whenever Willie possessed more than might humanely be turned upon the mantelshelf or the dressing-table, he considerately remained outdoors until such time as he judged his little friend to be asleep. He would then go home, remove his boots before inserting his latch-key, steal stealthily upstairs, and secrete the wad with great swiftness in some unusual place—beneath the carpet, behind the arras, in the water-receptacle of the gas-fittings, in the basic cavity of the stone matchbox, or down the scoop-sheath at the back of the coal-hopper. In discovering sites where his little roll or rouleaux might pass the night without running the risk of being converted into pin-money his ingenuity was wonderful; and yet at times he failed. On such occasions, when he had thrice lifted the arras to look for the collar-stud which he held in his fist, or had re-stoked the unkindled fire five times in four minutes, she had a way of enquiring, "What on earth are you looking for, dear?" with a candour that transcended the limit of the merely human and passed into the thrilling region of divine effrontery. And when at last she left him—which she did when the four walls had been sold by auction and the house-breaking contractors had shored-up the property with oak beams until the time came to pull

it down—Willie and I went over the ground afresh, taking up all the flooring and even shifting the hearthstone, in an anguished hunt for a certain £200 which he never, never knew the going of. But it was all *nix bonum*, as the Latins say. Many a man who has lost money as easily as this has retired to some quiet tavern parlour where he could drink himself into trance without fear of interruption; but Shifter vegetated at greater heights. Sadly, almost silently, we jointly opened a keg of nails at the old Adelphi Club and proceeded eastwards to take over a fresh set of furnished rooms in Dane's Inn.

And, for at least one reason, it was a memorable take-over, that reason being represented by nothing more important or unusual than an ordinary surveyor's long-linked chain land-measure. There may have been one hundred yards of it or there may have been two: the point is unremembered and unimportant; but as Shifter caught sight of it his eyes sparkled and his anxiety to sign the agreement which the retiring tenant—an excellent sort of chap and one who was obviously game for anything—had ready, increased tenfold. The legal deed being executed between the parties, attested by myself, and duly celebrated at the little medicine-cupboard inside the door of the bedroom, Willie picked up the chain-measure, and addressing his new landlord, observed:

"If you have nothing better to do, I can offer you a little entertainment with the E Division of Police and a cut off the saddle at Simpson's afterwards. Are you on?"

And, with a somewhat puzzled air, the new chum replied in the affirmative. As the clock of St Clement's Church struck seven, three young men

stepped out of the gates of dear, dirty, old, and now demolished, Dane's Inn. And one was tall and stout, and one was of medium height and clean-shaven, and the third was small and carried a prodigious nose. Through old Holywell Street they went, unheeding invitations to partake of "half-a-dozen native oysters, with roll and butter, for sixpence"; inattentive to the chant of the tout at the door of the snide picture-sale with his monotonous "Now on, gentlemen; now on," and careless of the hawkers of "ten-a-penny, all cracked." On past the alley with the outlet in Drury Lane which was the favourite bolt-hole of so many watch-snatchers, on past the doorway of the once red-hot Newmarket Club, on past even Short's.

"One, I think, before we begin," said the little man with the large nose, turning into the Gaiety bar; and none dissented. "Now," continued he, half pulling from his pocket the chain which so nearly resembled a cable of wire puzzles, and speaking to the man of medium height, "you will assist me with the measurements and Arthur will put them down in a book." It was twenty minutes past seven when the trio emerged from the Gaiety, and, with a few strides, came to the corner of Wellington Street. Nobody took much notice of them until the tall stout one held an open book in one hand and a pencil in the other, while the clean-shaven one knelt upon the stones, holding one end of the long-linked chain, and the little man ran across the road carrying the other end. When he got to the opposite pavement he, too, knelt down, and held the chain flush to the doorstep of the public house, 'The Wellington.' "Forty-four and a quarter!" he shouted. The tallest man cried "Right!" and put the measurement down. A Brentford market

cart with three somnolent white horses had drawn up, waiting till the chain was picked up, and twenty or thirty pedestrians had halted in their walk. The little man caught a ragged boy by the coat sleeve. "Put your foot on that chain, there's a good lad," he said, and the boy obeyed. Then the little man ran across the road, and moved the clean-shaven man's end of the chain, so that it extended diagonally across the road to the workmen's entrance of the *Morning Post*. "Fifty-seven and a bittock!" shouted the little man, and, once again, the taller prospector cried "Right!" and put it down. Then the clean-shaven man measured the steps of the *Morning Post* office, and some machine-minders, who had peeled off enough clothes to feel comfortable, came out to look on. "Higher up, there!" cried a cabman, who, with five or six others, had pulled up just on the rise and by the side of the linked chain; but the surveyors paid no attention. Attracted by the block in the traffic a police constable came along and, to the smothered delight of the little man with the huge nose, took over the stage-management. This little brighteyes from up the street was one of those quick-witted, top-heavy, far-seeing officers who could, when required, remove his gloves and put down a rebellion single-handed. He literally pounced upon the foremost cabby, who was by this time heavily engaged in a war of words with the inkiest of the *Morning Post* machinists, and roared "Never mind about 'Go-and-take-a-bath'; *you* take that hansom round by Catherin' Street!"; and the six cabs disappeared. And not only did he do all this, but he posted a brother officer in the roadway opposite the Victoria Club!

A brougham, with a large dress-basket on the box by the side of the coachman, pulled up just short of the second blue-coat. "Might let's slip by, mister," the coachman pleaded, "we're due at the Canterb'ry in three minutes"; but the constable was as adamant, and the brougham had to turn out to the left. By this time the crowd was sufficient to choke the thoroughfare at the Strand end.

"I didn't think," said one busybody, "as they'd have interfered with the *Mornin' Post*; I was under the impression as the new street started from the drinkin'-trough outside the pastrycook's."

"Accordin' to this," ventured a second, "even Dewry Lane Th'ayter itself must come down. This comes o' blindly votin' for a County Council!"

Meantime the little man with the Cyreno proboscis had moved the end of the chain over which the ragged boy had been mounting sentinel, up from the 'Wellington' to the portico of the Lyceum Theatre, and now the tall, stout man took the other end up the steps and through the swing doors of the Victoria Club. Many fresh wayfarers became deeply interested and hung about the bottom of the club steps until the adipose man reappeared. He did not call out any measurements, because he himself carried the book, but he dropped his end of the chain while he noted something down. So great was the concourse of people that a third policeman appeared. The three surveyors became busier than ever. "Thirty-two and a half!" "Fifteen, seven!" "Ninety-three on the cross!" they shouted continually. The agility of the little man and he who was clean-shaven was really wonderful. To and fro across the road the pair were continually running, clinking the chain

behind them, while the more portly one was no less assiduous in recording the proportions. The three policemen were of the greatest assistance. They seemed to enter into the business with body and soul, determined to afford the reconnoitring party all the aid that the law could give.

Just about this time a tall man of military appearance and strong build came down the street from a northerly direction. He was very upright, and had a red face and grey hair, with a moustache that had been pruned to the consistency of a toothbrush. It was Mr Richard William Steggles, the then Superintendent at Bow Street, and, on catching sight of him, all three constables brought their bootheels together smartly and swung their right hands to their helmets. Mr Steggles pushed his way through the crowd, and stood for a moment looking enquiringly on before interrogating his men.

But these things had not passed unnoticed by the measuring trio, and, as the chief constable turned angrily upon his subordinates, the tall and adipose surveyor slid quickly up to his clean-shaven confederate and whispered in his ear, "Duck! Do you hear me, duck! Into a pub, round a street-corner, anywhere you like, but duck. Meet us in five minutes on the first floor at Simpson's!" It was not difficult in such a crowd for a man of expressionless countenance to wander away into the traffic, nor for a small person to conceal his nose in his handkerchief and stray into the flower-market. As for the adipose one, why, with the Gaiety stage-door at his very elbow, a call on Charliarris in his managerial room and a subsequent exit by the front door were obvious courses. Only once have I passed in and out of a

theatre as precipitately—although that, as a brother brush has said, is quite another story.

I had been roaming about the town one afternoon with a dear old chum, who has long since solved the great secret of what happens after the undertaker has done his worst—Isidor Emanuel Wertheimer—and we were on our way to his rooms in Bury Street, St James's, to get into the clothes which most men put on about the evening hour of seven, "whether they dine or not," as the author of *San Toy* once remarked. We had mapped out a quiet little evening, to commence with something off the grill in the American Bar, and a box at the Empire with two little ladies to follow. Wertheimer had posted the box-ticket to the fair ones, they being unable to join us until nine or ten o'clock.

In Piccadilly we ran into one John Edmund Chandler, another good fellow who has since changed his address from Old Bond Street and Crawley Down to Over There, and the programme, so far as the consumption of mixed grills in the American Bar was concerned, was abandoned. For Chandler told us that he was expecting two or three of the cheeriest souls alive to take pot-luck with him in his rooms, which were those formerly occupied by the now defunct Lyric Club, and were situated over Windover's, the carriage-builders; and he insisted on us joining the party. Our plea about the box at the Empire and the two beautiful ladies who were to be in it by ten o'clock only served to settle the business, for Chandler promised faithfully that we should go as soon as dinner was over, "which," he added, "is generally about the time I fall asleep in my chair."

So it happened that about seven o'clock we rapped

on Chandler's oak, and were admitted by his man to the front room of the big flat, which was fitted up as a billiard-room. Now Chandler was in his way a bit of a collector of old paintings, antique clocks, and all sorts of out-of-date rubbish, and beneath the full-sized Burroughes-and-Watts, which stood in the centre of the apartment, was a mass of dusty bric-à-brac and 'bargains' which had accumulated during his tenancy in Old Bond Street. At the end of the room furthest from the window was a bed made up, no doubt, for the reception of any visitor who might be seized by paralysis while waiting for his stroke, and around the walls were several saddlebag armchairs and a settee or two. A huge, frameless oil-painting from the Paris Salon—a nude, by Le Quesne, representing a black woman and a white arising from huge oyster shells—was affixed to the wall by drawing-pins, whilst other unconventional trappings and fixings too humorous to mention gave ample evidence of the free and unfettered disposition of the host.

Having taken off our overcoats and thrown them down somewhere or other, we were joined by Chandler himself, who was quite in his best humour, the cheery souls having all turned up and being quite ready for several sherrys and curaçoas. For a quarter of an hour or so the faithful henchman with his trusty cork-screw never knew a dull moment, and then it was that our host, whose welcome consisted principally of distributing hearty slaps on the back and murmured "Dear old chaps!" among his guests, thought it would be quite to the taste of everybody to have "just a few rats, James, before we sit down to the soup." He suggested them just as anybody else might have intimated that a dozen natives apiece across Regent

Street at Mrs Driver's wouldn't be a bad lead-off; and, almost before anybody had time to second the proposition, the alert James brought the rodents in.

There were just two dozen of them in a common wire cage, and by the way in which they squeaked and struggled in their prison it occurred to me that it had been a long time between meals with them. Then Chandler called, quite affectionately, for the "little dawg," and, greatly to my surprise, it turned out to be one of those chrysanthemum canines from the Isle of Skye: one of the little toy bow-wows that women love to pat and make a sickening fuss of: one of the representatives of Esau in the great dog congress. Hardly had the little dawg got into the room than there was a shout of "Hallo there!" from Chandler; the cage swished in the air, and a living rat took me clean in the left eye! Jack had pressed the cage door open and swung the whole of the twenty-four rats all over the billiard-table! Some rushed for the pockets, squealing in their fright, whilst others boldly jumped over the cushions and ran round the room in search of bolt-holes. Somebody lifted the little dog on to the table, and, amidst encouraging shouts of "That's it—good dorg—give it to him!" he instantly killed his first rat, in baulk. A second rodent was turned out of the top left-hand pocket, and, shifting his play to that end of the table, the ragged little fellow slew the little grey pest just where the red ball should have been, to a delighted chorus of "That's it, boy, you're not spot-barred!" Up and down the table he went after the vermin until eleven rats lay bleeding and gasping and dying on the green cloth. Then, as there were no more on the table, 'Rags' was put upon the floor to hunt for the 'lost balls.' From

time to time he would turn a rodent out from the interior of a grandfather's clock or put up another from playing Brer Rabbit in a mediæval soup-tureen. Others were found in the bed, beneath sofa-cushions, and behind the cue-rack; and in all nineteen had been accounted for when the butler came in with the welcome news that dinner was on the table.

From a conversational point of view the dinner was not a brilliant success. For our host, having lately purchased a house in Sussex, ever so many miles from a railway station, was taking in country life through the pores of his skin, and he shut us all up by offering to bet an even tenner that nobody at the table could put down upon paper the rough song of the linnet. If the generous reader will pardon my thrusting a piece of purely personal and entirely useless information upon him, I may assure him that I didn't even try. Having been born within one hundred yards of Oxford Circus, I never did vegetate comfortably among rustics, and should find no delight whatever in being noticed in the county press as the producer of the fattest pig or the biggest turnip that ever was seen. Since my parents put me here without authority —and probably without intention—the pavements have always been good enough for me.

Others, however, politely disposed to humour the man whose food they were consuming, had a shot at it for wagers of small silver, but none got even near the goal. Their essays were mostly of one, or at most three, words; whereas Chandler, triumphantly producing a copy of *The Sporting Life* (to which sound authority he had previously written) and turning to the "Answers to Correspondents," proclaimed:

"The linnet's rough song is—Tolic-gow-gow, tolic-

joey-fair, tolic-hickey-gee, tolic-equay-quake, tuc-tuc-wizzie, tuc-tuc-joey, equay-quake-a-weet, tuc-tuc-weet!"

And one and all cried, sycophantically:

"Of course it is! Why couldn't we think of that?"

No sooner was the dinner over than our host proved to us that he was no liar about his habits by dropping off into a heavy and evidently much-needed slumber. It was the happy, guileless sleep that the young mother loves to notice in the faces of her darlings when she goes into their room to see if they are covered up all right before she herself retires, and it absolved us of any obligation to stay any longer than we wanted to. At least, *I* thought so. There are some persons so tied to the conventionalities that they would have awakened a host to say 'good-bye,' but I do not believe in doing that. Personally I thanked the butler for a perfectly delightful time, and begged that he would not take the trouble to come downstairs to the street-door—although, as he said, it was no trouble at all as he'd got to go down to put the kitten out.

On going into the billiard-room to gather my coat and my companion I found Chandler's man-servant on his hands and knees, shifting the relics stored beneath the billiard-table so that the little dog could get in and out more freely. Looking up, beaming with satisfaction, he remarked:

"He's caught two more, sir, while you've been at dinner: that makes twenty-one in all."

As I did not wish to wound the simple creature's sensitive feelings, I put an amount of false joy into my "No, really?" that was worth much more than the information itself, picked up my coat, which lay in a heap on one of the saddlebag settees, and,

joining Wertheimer outside, started to walk to the Empire.

I well remember what a crowd there was at the Empire on that night, even greater, I think, than after an average University Boat Race. As we passed through we encountered Mr Slater, who told us that one lady only had arrived and had taken possession of the box. It was Isidor's fairy of the moment, and her name was Lenore Mitchell.

Lenore was a handsome, rather than a pretty woman, and had been accustomed to rule those within her environment with a pettish will. If she had really been a queen instead of merely thinking that she was one, her subjects would have experienced a stormy reign, with variable winds changing to a gale later, and perhaps some snow.

Isidor introduced me to her as the author of a story which she had read, and she instantly showered her patronage upon me.

"Sit there," she said with the dictatorial air of the man who calls in on publishing day to eat the editor, at the same time indicating the only unoccupied chair in the box, and I threw away my coat and sat there. Most willingly would I have taken greater care of my cover, but, coming straight out of the glare of the circle into the dim red-walled box, I couldn't locate the coat-pegs, and, after all, undue consideration for one's clothing is, so my observation leads me to believe, in the very worst taste.

Lenore looked me over critically for several seconds with an air that caused me to feel about three degrees homelier than mud.

"Now, Arthur," she said, imperiously, "if I like you you will know me as well in ten minutes as you would

in a lifetime; talk to me and amuse me; and you, Isidor, leave us. Go into the circle and smoke a cigar."

Without hesitating, Isidor went out, and, as the box-door closed, I made a wild attempt to start something, with that inward want of confidence that comes over one who has commenced telling a good story and remembers all too late that the whole point of the thing turns upon an incident which is utterly unfit to be related, and who sees that the only possible way out is to invent some other situation which is sure to be quite pointless and probably even puerile. One can't always sparkle, especially to order. I remember a certain gilt-edged youth who once took Bessie Bellwood out to supper. He had long read of her as a regular mirth-provoker, one of the most witching and enchanting females on the stage, and when he met her at the Café Royal, his face was wreathed with smiles as he anticipated the side-splitters which would shortly fall from her lips. Only when some twenty minutes had elapsed, and she opened her mouth and said, "I suppose you don't happen to know any certain cure for a soft corn?" did he finish his supper right hurriedly and excuse himself on the ground of having remembered an important appointment on lucrative business with a man who had been dead and buried for over three weeks.

Happily or otherwise, I was spared the torture of inventing false-finishes, for I had barely spoken one hundred words when Lenore, tilting her chair a little forward and bringing her fair face nearer to mine, said quietly, yet still commandingly:

"Kiss me."

Here was a proper three-horned dilemma! As

one with very clearly defined views upon the rights of ownership, I would reluctantly have declined; as one invited to play second violin with a prospect of ultimate promotion to leadership, I might have complied irresolutely; but as one who would rather be sandpapered than appear indifferent to a proffered favour, I had but one course open. Moreover, had I hesitated, she might have wondered whether I expected a gratuity.

I do not remember the colour of her eyes, but as they looked straight into mine they wore a rare sweet expression. Perhaps it was one of gratitude for being let off the rest of that story. Alas! I shall never know. If only she had kept on looking at me all might have been well; instead her optics wandered to the corner of the box where lay my overcoat, and my gaze went there too.

Slowly, cautiously from one of the pockets of that coat stole an old grey rat. He was as big as a kitten and as wary as a night constable's rubber boots. When fairly out of my pocket he sat up, looked round about him and stroked his veteran whiskers. Lenore was glaring at him and trembling. Her shaking little hands clutched at her skirts and drew them more tightly around her. I observed, by the way, that she wore sky-blue suspenders. Swiftly and stealthily I slipped one arm out of my dress coat, remembering how the late lamented Abraham Bartlett once recaptured an absconding alligator by throwing a hearthrug across its back and forcibly grappling with it. I would adopt with this rodent the self-same tactics by which the excellent old superintendent of the Zoo subdued the saurian. Just as I was ready, the beautiful Lenore upset it all. She gave a piercing

shriek. The mental balance of the rat was temporarily upset. With what intent I know not, it took one bound and then scampered——

Would that I might break the tale off here and by so doing continue to hold my head up in the front-parlours of smug respectability. Cannot I appeal, or interplead, or get leave to defend? No; the truth must come out.

The rat, then, scampered clean up Lenore's lace petticoats and did not come down again! Poor girl! she breathed in frenzied gulps and gazed at me imploringly. She was becoming whiter and whiter every instant, and presently would surely swoon. My first impulse was to wind a handkerchief round my right fist as a protection against the varmint's teeth——

But, hang it all, I *couldn't*——

With my head positively swimming, I pressed the latch of the box-door and got out somehow. I grabbed at two gorgeous damsels who were passing, and, handing them my gloves and handkerchief, implored them to go into the box and do what they could for a sister in distress.

A policeman, in the street outside, grabbed me by the arm after I had, as one in a dream, walked into a lamp-post and caused my nose to bleed.

Next morning the sun came up as usual; but I never saw Lenore again. She travelled on the morrow, it subsequently transpired, to Edinburgh, to make a last appeal to a lover who had grown tired of her. Presumably she pleaded all in vain, for, two days later, she shot herself in the breast in a first-class carriage on the Midland Railway and died in a cottage at Bedford to which some railway labourers carried her.

CHAPTER II.

Back to the Empire—Swears and Peter start for Brighton—But 'do in' the last train—Fifty miles in a Ball's Pond hansom!—At ten shillings a mile—On genteel and on vulgar deaths—The record to Horley broken—When Tom Bowling was a road-coachman—Brighton at last!—Frank Slavin's first meeting with plovers' eggs—Romano criticises his own tariff—Phil May takes four pals to the N.S.C.—And wins thirty sovereigns on Kid M'Kipp—He stands a fruit-salad supper—Phil receives an editorial reminder—And rides in a four-wheeler—A matutinal douche—Saturday night at the Savage Club—To meet the Duke of Teck—Phil does a little sketching—And breakfasts with a famous biscuit-baker—Their subsequent adjournment to Richmond.

It fell upon a fateful night not very many years ago that my inclination again took me to the Empire, and there, in the promenade that has caused so many heart-aches, I came across Swears and the cheery individual whom all the boys of that day knew as 'Peter'—simply 'Peter.' Now I have ever been a perfect walking encyclopædia of useless knowledge, and, before two minutes had elapsed, I had added to my stock of unwisdom the item that Peter and Swears were going down to Brighton together by the 11.50 in order to shake a loose leg at a ball which was being given by a man who owed Swears a 'monkey.' Not only did he owe Swears a 'monkey,' but what was a much more important matter, he had that very

morning taken his oath broken a plate, blown out a match, and even offered to bet a luncheon for a dozen that he would positively hand over the stuff if only Swears would turn up at the Brighton hop before they footed the last saraband—or say before six a.m. As the 11.50 from Victoria runs down in just seventy-five minutes, the 'monkey' looked as good as a walk-over for them; meantime the obvious course was to see the Empire out. This was a walk-over, too. Heedless of clocks, we stood by the bar where so many mighty schemes have been discussed—where even Derby winners have been bought overnight—and talked and tippled till the dismal strains of the National Anthem drowned the conversational purr and gave us the office to go.

"By jigs, never knew time slip by so quickly," cried Peter; but Swears had already grappled with the fact, and was elbowing his way through the light-hearted crowd that occupied the space between his white waistcoat and the way out. Falling into the breach that Swears' passage made, Peter and I followed him into the street, where Peter amply justified his name by putting up his first bluff. There were two reasons, he said, why he was bound to call at the Continental. Firstly, the fish of which he partook at lunch must have been every bit as salt as Lot's wife's elbow; secondly, he had got to say something in three minutes to a girl who had wired to say that she was without hope, boots, beer or money. Under ordinary circumstances Swears would have asked Peter if his girl friend couldn't bring a girl friend with her, but he was so absorbed in the details of a scheme to break away that he forgot his lines; and within the next few minutes we reached the Continental.

It was at 11.46 precisely that, casting off something in pale grey eolienne that was telling us that she was not really wicked at heart but did love to have a good time, that we awoke suddenly to the need of a swift hansom, and proceeded to pile into one that was pulled up at the kerbstone—I going along as the representative of the See 'Em Off Club.

"Victoria!" cried Swears to the driver, mounting the step, "and in four minutes."

Like a greased whirlwind we flew along Pall Mall and rounded the Marlborough House corner in a style that caused the sentries to halt and look round. But no sound of a crash reached them out of the darkness: our cabman knew that his road was clear and galloped the turn with several yards to spare. All in vain, however, was the gallant effort: the time allowance was all too short, and we rattled into the station yard and raced through the booking-office on to the platform, only to find that the 11.50 had been gone nearly two minutes.

Idle and useless it was to contaminate the atmosphere with profanity, desperate as was Swears' case—though he alone would not admit the apparent hopelessness of it.

"If Charlie said *six* o'clock," he gasped, "two minutes *past* six would be two minutes too late! Six hours and eight minutes yet remain, and though Heaven itself defied me"—here he shook his fist furiously, if unconsciously, at the crippled old lavatory attendant, who was leaving for the night but had paused to gaze in wonderment at our excited little group—"even *then* I would have a shy at doing it! Peter—Arthur, come outside."

The honest cab-horse that had brought us down

was getting its wind again as we returned from the platform to the pavement of the station yard. The cabman, a fat fellow with a neutral zone between his vest and breeches, eyed us with undisguised surprise.

"Gawd's trooth! you don't mean to say as you've been an' done the train in, gents?" he exclaimed, as with his right palm and some affection he smoothed down his steed's coat between the pad and the crupper —a little touch of *camaraderie* not infrequently shown to a horse by a cabman whose "Well, I'll leave it to you, sir," has not been illiberally interpreted. Though nobody gave the man a direct answer, Swears' next remark was sufficiently significant to be mistaken for a reply in the affirmative.

"Where do you put up?"

"Just off the Ball's Pond Road, sir," replied the cabman, who most probably was well aware that no trains ran to that fashionable seaport from Victoria, and then added, "But, lord! we night lots ain't partickler; where didjer wanter go to—Clap'am, Brixt'n, Streat'am, Bal'am— on'y give it a name?"

In a voice that was not entirely free from emotion, but full of terrible earnestness, Swears replied:

"I must be at the Old Ship at Brighton by six to-morrow morning!"

Then it was that the cabman's buoyancy of spirit underwent a sharp and vehement slump; even his voice, when next he spoke, was changed. He did not in tones of hopeful cheer volunteer to make the attempt, e'en though he doubted his Rozinante's ability to quite get the course, but instead, in the grating, pessimistic, tired-out tones of one who had accidentally removed one or both of his tonsils while eating with his knife, he began a dissertation, un-

promising as to probable length, on the value of his employer's animated rolling-stock.

"My guv'nor, he sets a lot o' store by this yere mare, mister," said he; "he gived fifteen quid for 'er, he did, on'y a week ago up to Ward's deposit-erry, an' I don't reckon she'd ever fetch that money agen after a-doin' fifty-two miles in less'n six hours! It wants a bit o' doin'! Of course, as I say, she ain't *my* property, an' I wouldn't like to take a liberty with no other man's property any more than I should like another man to take a liberty——"

"I care nothing about taking liberties!" cried Swears, chipping in and cutting the cabman's moral soliloquy short in the middle. "My business is to be in Brighton by six o'clock to-morrow morning, and the man that takes me there gets a 'pony' for his trouble. See?"

"Five-and-twenty quid, straight?" gasped the cabman, incredulously.

"Five new fivers, absolutely!" replied Swears, unbuttoning his overcoat and thrusting his right hand inside his waistcoat suggestively. And he added, ingenuously enough, "And next week's the City and Suburban, too!"

The weak being, catalogued as a man and badged with enamelled iron, wavered. Had not the first Napoleon—the only Nap that took any beating worth mentioning—acknowledged that after conquering all the allied armies of Europe, it was England's paper money that had sent him to St Helena? That self-same paper money has carried all before it ever since, and how could a mere London cabman—a single lowly representative of the great two-wheel Transport Trust—hold out where the greatest Emperor in

modern history had had to own that the situation had got him where his hair was short?

"Get in, gents," said the cabby, utterly regardless of consequences. And Swears and Peter got in.

Around the corner and adown the dreary vista of the Vauxhall Bridge Road sped the hapless 'shoful,' and in less than five minutes from the time of its starting it crossed over into the region south of the Thames, over which in ancient times good Edmund reigned until bloody Edric, who has been happily described as the Iscariot of his day, arose and rubbed him out, massacring the royal adherents and confiscating so much money that anyone else but he would have been ashamed to take it.

It was not until the cab was approaching the 'Swan' at Stockwell—with the 'Swan' just closing—that it occurred to the practical mind of Peter to victual the expedition; at the same time every instant was of the greatest value, and even less time could be allowed for stoppages than at road-coaching. Three minutes at the 'Swan,' therefore, sufficed in which to take aboard two bottles of Scotch whisky, six of soda-water, and an armour-plated pork pie for the sustenance of the coachman. Then to the road again.

The old mare threw up her head as she scented the grass and the lilac bushes on leaving the bricks and mortar behind and making for Streatham Hill, but her pace was well maintained, and there began to be something of sport in the clinking of the chains that held her traces, and in her occasional snort of pleasure as she sped past the market gardens. Down amongst the labourers' cottages of Thornton Heath she ceased to utter these manifestations of joy, and when at last, with streets growing narrower and tram

lines commencing, she entered Croydon, all her old metropolitan lassitude came back. But as she pondered and still went forward, the stones gave way to macadam again, and the coach road at Caterham looked like chalk in the pale moonlight. On, on she went, with nothing but nodding laburnums to welcome her, to Purley; and at Cane Hill, on passing the lunatic asylum, she broke into a gallop at the pop of a soda-water cork, released by one of the two passengers in celebration of the fact that up to now he had been foxy enough to keep on the right side of the walls of that sombre institution.

From sounds that assailed his ears as his game little mare clattered along the last macadamised mile into Red Hill, the adventurous cabman came to the conclusion that his 'fares' were sleeping. Every now and again an alcoholic snort would penetrate the stillness of the night, until at last a queer feeling of loneliness—or of loneliness and apprehension mixed—stole over the mind of the driver. Certainly these 'toffs' from the Continental had promised him a 'pony' if he got them to Brighton by six o'clock; but what if he *didn't*? It had never crossed his brain to ask for 'a bit on account,' and supposing, from his horse knocking up or any equally likely disaster, he should fail to quite carry out his contract to the letter, how was *he* going on? At that moment the spirit was strong upon him to pull up, shake his two 'insides' out of their slumber, and have a fresh *pro rata* arrangement. At worst, they could only swear at him, and even *that* would be preferable to this awful stillness, accentuated by the snail's pace at which the now thoroughly tired mare was creeping up the steep hill that leads to Earlswood Common.

Man is a creature that yearns for sympathy, of however qualified a sort. I remember, years and years ago, a real good fellow confiding to Billie Fitzwilliam in the middle of the long, cat-hymned watches of the night the gruesome intelligence that his end was near.

"B-B-Billie, old man," he groaned, "my d-d-doctor says that I'm d-d-dying of drink!"

"Never mind, old fellow, never mind," answered Billie, always cheerful, as he wrung the miserable one's hand, "after all, it's an honourable and gentlemanly death—a damn sight more so than—than, well, blood-poisoning, for instance!"

The famous bunch of trees know as 'the Surrey stag' grew bigger and bigger against the southern sky, and Earlswood Asylum, on the left, mocked the trusting cabby in the most personal manner, but still he forbade to wake up his fares. A little further on a hare darted across the moonlit road, right under the very nose of the mare, so startling that estimable animal that she took her bit in her mouth and put up a gallop that carried the cavalcade slap into Horley.

Peter and Swears awoke together and gazed sleepily at the shutters of the shops in the main street. It was still quite dark, but not too opaque to obscure from Swears' quick eyes a passing glimpse of a large clock-face which seemed to be hanging dangerously near the pavement on the off side. An instantaneous, fleeting vision, in which the position of the clock's hands were distinctly revealed, caused Swears to shove up the little trap-door in the cab roof and cry :—

"Hoy—cabby—what place is this?"

"Horley, sir; we shall pass the old 'Chequers' directly."

"Are you *sure* it's Horley?"

"Positive, sir."

"Good lord! Twenty-five miles in two hours! Why, we shall win in a canter *now*!"

"Aye, I can tell ye, sir, this mare's been a-puttin' in some clinkin' fine work while you two gents has been a-dozin'."

"I will buy her a new set of harness and you a new whip!" cried the delighted Swears, re-settling his left shoulder in the corner and closing his eyes again. O, the blissfulness of ignorance: the merciful blessedness of undiscovered truth! For it was no clock that Ernest had seen, nothing but Messrs Sarsanet and Tearit's, the excellent linendraper's, newly-painted revolving shutter embellished with the legend:

All, barring the mare, were in somewhat cheerier vein, therefore, as they passed the historic 'Chequers' and entered upon that long, level five-mile-run which the coachmen all tell you was laid with a foundation of flagstones by order of fine old George the Fourth, shortly after he had been unceremoniously tumbled out of his chariot in company with something very

choice that he was taking down to 'Saturday-to-Monday' at the Pavilion. I should not have repeated this morsel of scandal but that the plain unvarnished truth is best suited to this democratic age, and it is now generally admitted that George was most distinctly whatever they called 'a bit peas-in-the-pot' in 1825. His biographers agree that he was more for the lithe and limber than the literary woman. He also openly preferred playing the friend to some poor girl who, as likely as not, had never known what a comfortable home was before, to spending his evenings with the alcoholic hunchbellies of his own age at White's or the Marlborough.

Meantime the honest mare was growing decidedly leg-weary. Though for the next few miles she hammered away in a style that suggested her possession of a third or fourth 'wind,' she stopped almost to a walk at the foot of Slangham Hill; and small wonder. For it is at this point that even a full-chested coaching team is reinforced by a fifth, or 'cock' horse, and Stanley Cave, the dandy little guard of the 'Comet,' who straddles the pigskin and rides up the hill, has immortalised the fact in what passes for poetry at the White Horse Cellars. As dear old Dickie the Driver exclaimed one evening, "Only fancy Tom Bowling having been a road-coachman! *I* never knew it until last night!" And when sorely puzzled men asked what on earth he meant, he blandly explained that he had been taken to hear a freshly-imported tenor who, alluding to Dibdin's immortal hero, had warbled most clearly, "For though his body's under Hatchett's," a most conclusive proof, Dickie argued, that Tom was well known at the Cellars, and in all probability used to drive a

coach from the house daily in some famous bygone era.

As at last the deep dark blues of departing night gave place to the grey and cerise tints of the approaching day, a pitiable turn-out, drawn by a heart-broken steed with but three legs and a swinger—a weary living thing that urged onward with merely mechanical motion, because it had not the vitality to pull up and naturally refrained from incurring the pain of falling down—rolled beneath the high stone viaduct marking the northern boundary of the town of Brighton. A few yards more and the patient and courageous mare who had given her speed, her stamina—almost life itself—in order that her flinty-hearted lessee should make a Cockney holiday at Epsom, dropped, like Nicanor, without so much as busting a hame strap! As the shafts went down, Swears and Peter were projected violently against the splashboard, while the panting sides of the beaten animal resounded with the blows of many empty soda-water bottles falling from the cab roof!

From the belfry of the big church standing reproachfully in the middle of the Steyne came booming the hour of six.

"Come along, Peter, come along, we shall do it yet!" shouted Swears, grabbing his companion by the arm, and pulling him off the foot-board.

"Arf a mo! arf a mo!" cried the cabby, who had slidden down rather than lowered himself in the regulation way from his dickey. "D'ye mean to say as, after all, you ain't a-paying out?"

"Here's my card," answered Swears, excitedly thrusting a bit of pasteboard into the man's hand, "call at the Old Ship later on—call about ten!"

"Bilked! By the Great Horn Spoon, BILKED!" yelled the cabman in sheer despair, as he collapsed in the road beside the body of his horse.

. . . . . .

But, of course, he wasn't bilked. He called and got his 'pony' right enough, and—a new hat at Mutton's besides. For your good gambler is never a hoarder, and, though the uninitiated may refuse to believe it, even as moles, no doubt, deny that the sun and stars exist, and think the lark stark mad for soaring in the sunshine, nothing except getting money gives a good plucked 'un more fun than putting it in circulation again. Which reminds me that shortly after Frank Patrick Slavin knocked, despite the cowardly interference of thirty-one hired ruffians taken to Bruges from the slums of Birmingham, seventeen distinct and different kinds of Hell out of ex-champion Jem Smith, he devoted a short season to the delusive joy of looking over this fair town. There is no need to dilate here on the shameful brutalities heaped upon 'Paddy' in that Belgian battle, nor to reiterate how he fought, and fought, and fought, taking the blow of the steel 'kosh' and the biff of the brass knuckles without a grunt as loud as that which is emitted by the new bull pup that has missed the maternal fount by three-quarters of an inch; had he then hoarded his financial resources he might now have been a prosperous innkeeper instead of being, as when last I heard of him, second soft-boiled egg steward on the night boat between Skagway and Dawson City—but a truce to moralising. As I entered Romano's restaurant one glorious afternoon, I encountered Frank Slavin just coming out.

"Say, come back into the bar an' take one for the worms wi' me," said he, as, grinning from ear to ear, he gently detained me with the grip of a rear brakesman on a gravel train. "I'll tell you somethin' that'll make you smile."

As I am invariably open to indulge in this highly intellectual exercise, I entered the bar with him. Frank had been standing lunch to three of the cheeriest johnnies that ever took the knock across the rails of a members' enclosure. Their beautifully-cut clothes, their finished diction—(and Slavin himself was justly proud of being educationally a bit above his brother fighters)—and their bright blue anecdotes were fresh-gathered ambrosia to him. But what tickled him more than a horsehair undershirt just then—the one touch that affected him with a prurient sensation most of all—was that Tommie Deane and Archie Browne had played a practical joke on him which the wily Captain Colman had completely counteracted, though still allowing the facetious twain to think that they'd got the best of it.

Now it is necessary to explain, for the benefit of country mice and those who prefer the grey peas and rustic security advocated by old Æsop to the distractions and dangers of the town, that one of the principal 'side-shows' in the restaurant is a damask-covered table placed in the ground-floor dining-room betwixt the plush *portière* and the little office in which the Roman used to produce the cash in change for the fleeting stumer—whatever that may mean. The horticultural and vegetable beauties of this display have ever appealed strongly to my sympathetic soul, although "I am glad that I never went in heartily for fruit," as the very foxed young gentleman at the old

Supper Club remarked after weighing out seventy shillings for the small pineapple on which his beautiful partner of that evening had suddenly set her hand and heart. But I admire it from afar. I look, but I never touch. Moreover, it would be a pity to disturb the symmetry of it, since, I shrewdly suspect, that in the early morn, before many customers are about, the rhubarb-editor of somebody's illustrated seed catalogue is retained to come in and arrange it, so artistically are the Arc-de-Triomphe artichokes grouped with the Isabella-Maria giant asparagus and the Gloire-de-Dijon gooseberries. Many other dazzling varieties of plant life and pie fruit—hothouse born, artificially matured and periodically pruned back and improved upon by all the sons of Adam since that inconsiderate old gentleman raised Cain—there are, 'the whole being crowned,' as the programme of the firework night hath it, with a grand display of small baskets of green moss, in each of which repose one dozen of the eggs of the unsociable and gregarious plover. But for these little eggs Frank Slavin might not have stopped me, and this good ink had not been shed.

"See here, this is just how it all came about," confided the merry ex-blacksmith from Maitland, pinning me in a corner and punctuating his diverting narrative by many playful prods and punches, the effects of which I still feel when rheumatism takes hold of me. "Before this lunching shivvoo got fairly started, the waiter brought out some funny little mottled eggs in a moss basket—honey-birds' eggs, I b'lieve they called 'em, though I didn't pay much attention, feeling it in my bones, somehow, that they were a-pulling my leg for me. There were just four dozen of 'em, an' Tommie an' Archie got into 'em like tar. My friend the Cap'n

and I were toyin' with some chopped egg an' anchovy; but Tommie an' Archie set to an' finished the whole settin' of those eggs—four dozen of 'em. Well, now comes where they think the hoss is on me. Sure as ye're born they tip the waiter the wink that I'm a new chum, an' don't eat honey-birds' eggs at every sittin', for when the bill comes they figure in it at seven pound four—four dozen at thirty-six shillin's a dozen. The Cap'n, grinnin' like old sin, invites me to step into the lavatory an' rinse my paws before takin' coffee an' cigars, an' I go. Behind the door he tells me very quietly how these two jokers have got the foreign waiter to put this game up in order to see me kick, an' raise a rumpus with the management, an' go on an' break things. 'Which,' says he, 'is a little trap you're not goin' to fall into, for I've squared the dago waiter to keep the joke up, an' you'll simply pay the bill in full without complainin', an' drop in here to-morrow mornin' and get your money back. See?' Now I call that dam decent of the Cap'n; in fact I'm goin' straight along to the Lowther now to buy his little boy a drum. But if you'd ha' seen the faces of those two fellows when I paid the bill without ever screamin' over that seven pound four—well! But come an' get this drink!"

Not to undeceive the great genial giant I laughed most heartily; nevertheless I watched the papers closely for several days, wondering which of the quartette he would eventually kill.

Although the well-worn growl at the Roman's prices has been swollen into a roar by hundreds of men who never paid a bill there, no doubt exists that his tariff was a bit steep at times. Indeed, I call to mind an occasion on which he and four or five others had been

lunching together. It had been anybody's table, and, as was not infrequently the case, the question of the bill was ultimately submitted to the hazard of the gentle flutter. It was the Roman himself who proposed it, and in the heaven-ordained order of such things, it was the Roman who got it. Then he adjusted his pince-nez, glanced in awe at some of the items, and, completely forgetting himself, roared out:

"Foura-pound eight! For what? What aswindling prices! Whata hava we ahad for it, I like to aknow! Of all whatyoucall outa-rageous——"

At this point, however, a roar of unsympathetic laughter broke up the Roman's soliloquy and recalled his attention to the fact that he was still in his own restaurant. But ere we take leave of the subject of the products of the trees and vines, let me discourse of a certain little fruit supper of Phil May's.

Upon an evening in early Spring, Philip strolled eastwards down the Strand, intent on picking up a little character. None can dispute the logic with which he chose his covert, for, on the assumption that one can find only when and where another has previously lost, there must be character by the ton and characters by the thousand littering London's liveliest thoroughfare. But the Adversary of Good Intentions side-tracked Phil. Scarcely had he drawn clear of the great railway station of which a bygone poet sang:

> "The terminus of Charing Cross
> Is haunted, when it rains,
> By Nymphs, who there a shelter seek,
> And wait for mythic trains"—

than he ran into four good fellows, brothers of the brush from the other side of the Atlantic, who had

been dining at the Cecil, and were now going north-westwards to the Empire, in order to, so to speak, put a tail on it and make it a complete dog. It is not infrequently done. But they paused to rally Philip, and the original object of their setting out was soon forgotten. All together they crossed the muddy road and entered Romano's.

It was over the second, or perchance the third, drink that Phil suddenly remembered it was a Monday night, and that, in consequence, there was a boxing show at the National Sporting. Why not take the boys along there? He made the generous suggestion to them—generous for the reason that a member ordinarily pays one guinea a head on his guests—and they instantly closed with it. Any other night would do for the Empire; 1000 to 3 Empire! With one more round in celebration of having fixed up something definite, and with five three-shilling cigars (regardless of the fact that they would have to be extinguished at the ring-side) the cavalcade set out for Covent Garden. Phil it was who passed first through the double rows of ex-prize-fighters that line the entrance to our premier boxing club on competition nights in order that none but the elected may enter; it was Phil who, addressing the little gentleman with the long moustache standing at the turnstile, said: "These four gentlemen are my guests, Jimmie," at the same time pulling out one of five fivers in order to comply with the committee's regulations. But it was the little gentleman with the long moustache who, looking first at the banknote and then at its owner, remarked: "Yes, but this is not an ordinary night; this is our big night, guests are five guineas apiece!"

Some hosts would have flinched and turned back, apologising to their friends and disappointing them; others might, like Cambronne, standing tall amidst the wreckage of his battalions at Waterloo, have uttered one defiant, dirty word, and—then tried to bargain for a quantity with the manager; but not Phil. Phil, serenely imperturbable and unmoved, merely drew forth from his breeches pocket the remaining banknotes, and replied: "All right, take for four."

With rather less than eighty shillings in his lately well-lined kick, Philip conducted his friends to their seats, and, almost simultaneously, Peggy Bettinson, the club manager, entered the ring to announce a six-round contest between Ginger Biggs, of Ball's Pond, and Kid M'Kipp, of Kingsland, adding, as seriously as though the fate of an Empire depended on it, "To-day, at two o'clock, Biggs weighed nine stone four, and Kipp nine stone five. Biggs is seconded by Jerry Driscoll (cheers), Jim Harper, and Arthur Guttridge; and M'Kipp by Jim Goode, Jim Maloney, and Bill Baxter. I must ask members and their friends to kindly abstain from smoking during the contest."

As the manager quitted the ring by ducking under the top rope, the bookies in the south-west corner of the reserved seats cried out that they would "take two to one," and May ventured to lay twenty to ten on M'Kipp. During the five or six minutes taken up by the adjustment of the four-ounce gloves and the completion of the fighters' toilettes, M'Kipp became an even firmer favourite, and at the call of 'Time!' he was a five-to-two-on chance. Mac's was a false reputation, however, for, after three common-

place rounds in which he barely kept ahead, the Ball's Pond youth began to score, and as the electric gong sent the men to their corners, at the end of the fourth round there arose a perfect babel of voices crying: "Well, Biggs wins for ten!"—and Phil May booked it, twice.

Then, metaphorically, Phil May's little cherub came down from aloft, and went to assist Goode and Maloney in the favourite's corner. M'Kipp dropped his old methods as completely as a cobra sheds its skin. Throwing caution aside he came at his man again and again like an infuriated ram, until Mr Biggs became so rattled that he didn't seem to know whether he was still afoot or on horseback. In a trice, or at most a trice and a half, Ginger Biggs, of Ball's Pond, was lying on the resined canvas-covered boards, and trying in vain to raise his swimming head. Poor Mr Biggs of Ball's Pond! He needed no further ocular demonstration of the mighty fact that the world goes round. Nor of any use to him were the ten seconds' grace allowed by the rules, so that, as the gong commenced ringing again, Jerry Driscoll and Arthur Guttridge picked up their fallen principal by the knees and armpits, whilst Phil May, wearing his most expansive grin, went round to the bookmaker to draw his thirty pounds.

Now, some men are born to money, some achieve money, while there are others who can't hold it for hot rivets. To the last class belongs Phil May, and when, a little later in the evening, he arraigned his fresh-air party from New York once more before the bar of the Café Romano, his winnings burdened him horribly. Not only had he recouped himself over the twenty guineas' worth of tickets, but he held a clear

tenner of the enemy's. Obviously, the only course open was to give a little supper to cost ten pounds.

To this, however, his acquaintances demurred. They declared that they had already done themselves too well at dinner. Accepting all this blathering protestation for what it subsequently proved to be worth, Philip called aside Otto, the then head waiter, and ordered a light little supper for five—one slice of galantine or a stuffed quail, a gâteau or a bombe glacée, and, for the crowning piece of all, a magnificent fruit salad. Such a fruit salad as Cleopatra made for Antony, as Calypso prepared for Ulysses—aye, as poor dear old Stiffy Smith used to concoct in the days when nobody ever went to bed or thought of reckoning money seriously.

Otto gravely shook his head. In March, he said, fruit was still rare and expensive.

"I said nothing to you about expense," said Phil, with more finality than usual. "Make the salad."

Ye gods and pygmean unpreserved sardines! But they all swore that a finer fruit salad never graced a table! Hothouse pines there were, mingling their delicate juices with the scented blood of nectarines at forty shillings a dozen. The baby seeds of tiny strawberries strayed over the crimson pulpy surfaces of the most exquisite fresh figs, and over all the mixture the glorious odour of the vintages of '74 and 1809 hovered like a hallowed film. It was the consummation of high art; there was no other term for it.

. . . . . .

"Otto, the bill?"

"Yessaire! T'irty-t'ree poundts twelfe! You say 'ang expenses. Is zat enough?"

"Do nicely," said Philip, without raising an eyebrow, but feeling about two stone lighter than feathers. "Please tell Mr Romano that I haven't got quite enough cash with me to settle my bill, but here are thirty pounds, and I'll give him the rest when I come in to-morrow. And now, please, call me a four-wheeler."

From Phil's last sentence, ordinary and commonplace though it may seem, I have always thought that the impression left upon his mind by that £33 supper was that it was the break-up of a *Punch* night. And by a '*Punch* night' all persons of cultivation and distinction—I purposely omit the vulgar and illiterate, whose views and feelings count for nothing in these, or indeed in any matters—will understand me to refer to the weekly gathering at which the staff of our charivari fix up the paper for the coming week. Phil is driven home from these assemblies always by the same trusted cabby; but on a certain evening of last summer this excellent arrangement was thrown somewhat out of gear by the 'annual cleaning' of the *Punch* premises. Phil had been staying at Bournemouth, a staid seaside resort so much to his liking that he is often to be found there when all other coverts have been drawn blank. It was there, by the way, that he was located late one autumn while the editors of the *Daily Graphic* waited patiently for a batch of special sketches for their Christmas Number. Quite possibly these worthy *rédacteurs* had exhausted all the ordinary methods for drawing 'copy' from recalcitrant contributors; anyway, as Philip came downstairs one morning and stepped out on to the hotel verandah in order to see what the weather was likely to be, six staid old sandwich-

boardmen came along in Indian file, and, pitching immediately in front of Master Philip, exhibited six large boards, each inscribed in twelve-inch red letters:

"PHIL MAY."

Not entirely unaccustomed to practical jokes, Phil smiled broadly and waved his right hand in acknowledgment, whereupon the six old men, like so many Drury Lane robin redbreasts in a pantomime, hopped round, and displayed their six backboards bearing the uniform inscription:

"DON'T FORGET THE GRAPHIC XMAS No.!"

During all that forenoon, wherever Phil May went the old boardmen went too. Once—once only—Phil approached the leader, and, giving the old man half a-crown, intimated that he had taken the reminder to heart and would attend to the matter; but the old fellow replied, with all possible respect, that he had 'got his orders.' At the accepted hour for luncheon Phil went back to the hotel and partook of an Orleans plum and a fresh cigar; but the boardmen still pursued him. Tennyson's implacable six hundred were lambs compared to this relentless half-dozen, and eventually Philip caved in. He sent the coffee-room waiter out to tell them that he would faithfully go up to town by the 3.56, and—bejabers! they were at the station to see him off!

Well, it was from this haven at Bournemouth that

Philip came to the *Punch* dinner which was not in its usual place, but at the Holborn Restaurant. On learning this from the sergeant doorkeeper, Phil strolled away westward; but his cabman, who drove up about two hours later, was much more disturbed. If the guv'nor hadn't been seen into a cab on the spot, he contended, there was no telling where he mightn't call in on the way, and the probability was that he'd take some finding. Consequently the faithful servitor pulled across the way and began his long search by calling at the 'Cheshire Cheese.' Here 'half of old Burton' went straight to the spot, but in other respects the call was unproductive. On then the cabby went by easy stages to various literary haunts, imbibing at some but disdaining others, till he reached the Holborn. The old fellow pulled round the corner from Little Queen Street just in time to see his cherished 'fare' telling the driver of a natty hansom to go straight to St John's Wood, barring making a call at Verrey's on the way. Promptly the retainer laid claim to his guv'nor, and the guv'nor as loyally paid off the hansom and entered the growler. A man may be considerably less than a hero to his valet, but to his regular cabman he is a mere chattel.

Much later it was when that four-wheeler drew into the kerbstone in front of Phil's garden wall, and the cabby, dozing with one eye, dog-fashion, rattled with his whip-handle on the offside windows as a sort of 'here-we-are-again' to his fare. But Phil was dozing with both eyes and slumbered peacefully on. The son of Jehu, distinctly the worse for wear and waiting, and far too wise to descend from his box, allowed a reasonable time for his passenger to alight, and then, with a muttered "Goo' ni', sir!" whipped up his

horse and drove home to his yard at Kensal Rise. Once there, with the yard gate swinging to and closing on its own account, the worn-out driver merely unbuckled the breeching and unhitched the traces and his steed walked voluntarily into its stall. Then, taking his rug and his whip into the house with him, the licensed coachman sought his own pallet, and all was quiet.

Estimate for yourself then, however roughly and perfunctorily, the angry astonishment of Phil May, R.I., on being rudely awakened at daybreak or thereabouts by receiving full in the face a steady jet of ice-cold water projected from a rubber hose:

"Hi! what the——"

The door, into which the sliding window had been but half dropped, opened instantly, and the earliest of the cab-washers, peering inside, blurted out in amazement:

"Lordlummy! An' blowed if it ain't old Harry's Wens'd'y reg'lar, too!"

Yet, when one is really sleepy, eight hours in a fourwheeler are not to be despised. And now if I momentarily put an obliterating paper-weight over the small card of *data* which forms the 'scenario' from which these stories are being constructed in order to tell you just one more little anecdote of dear old Phil, can you seriously blame me? He is such a sympathetic 'subject': his multifarious adventures run so smoothly one into another. And this incident originated at the Savage Club.

The late lamented Henry James Byron used to say that any member found guilty of paying his subscription to the Savage Club for two consecutive years was eligible for Colney Hatch, but as I have

neither the honour nor the inclination to belong to this hospitable tribe, I cannot say how this may be. In any case its entertainment committee made a somewhat stupid blunder on the occasion of the Duke of Teck's visit to the club in the summer of '94. Fearing that the usual happy-go-lucky entertainment which ordinarily follows the Saturday house-dinner might offend the Duke, its organisers cut it out bodily, and in its place arranged one of those shuddersomely refined affairs that are supposed to be meat and drink to the giddy suburbanite, when, dressed up till he can scarcely sit down, he takes Hilda to the local Athenæum. You know the sort of thing I mean. The orgie is opened by two unknown somebodies fighting the piano to a finish and calling it a duet, and is continued indefinitely by the yawping of ballads the music of which is anything but A1, whilst the words are about Z9.

For some time the Duke smiled politely, as though regarding it all as a sort of after-dinner hoax, but as the programme dragged its dreadful length along, and item succeeded item, the awful truth became too manifest to disguise, and the poor Duke gazed hopelessly round at the door as though looking for a rescuer to come along and throw him a life-line. The committee saw that look and recognised the necessity for doing something. The committee, figuratively, went through the club and dug out Phil May. Would he, like a good fellow, go on and tighten the thing up a bit? Phil was unable to say 'No,' that word not being in his vocabulary; he simply asked for some black chalks and a drawing-board and blandly faced the music.

Now the direct line of succession to the crown had

just been strengthened, and, by the same token, the Duke had just been made a grandfather by the birth of Prince Edward Albert; still never a Savage that gazed grimmingly on as Phil's deft fingers outlined a grotesque and squalling infant, dressed in long clothes and grabbing a feeding-bottle, imagined for an instant that the delineator would dare to pull the Duke's leg on the subject. Another ten seconds, however, put the matter beyond all doubt, for, as the artist finished the ludicrous figure, he surmounted it, in about a dozen strokes, by the Prince of Wales' plumes!

The Duke was positively convulsed with laughter. Placing his hands to his sides, he lay back in his chair and fairly shook, while the Savages, recovering their good spirits, simply roared. Phil's hit was the best thing of its kind that ever happened under a roof, since it completely turned the tide of the evening.

Newsboys were crying their wares in the bright Sunday sunshine in the Strand as the last two members to leave the Savage walked slowly along Adam Street. One was Phil May; the other was a celebrated biscuit-maker who has long been a millionaire. And, gazing at the glorious sky, the big biscuit man said that it did seem like doing a wicked thing to go home to bed. So it did. Why not, suggested the cheery knight of the heart cakes, take a nice cold tub and a cup of something at the Charing Cross Hotel, whilst two cabs go and fetch some other clothes and a third drives up to the stables and orders the mail-phaeton for ten o'clock to drive down to Richmond for lunch?

"Don't see why not," assented Phil, and four hansoms were whistled up. Two of them having been sent in quest of light suits and clean linen, and

a third to order up the equipage, Phil and the licensed-victualler's baker got into the fourth and drove to Charing Cross.

And now permit me to put the clock forward by about four hours and to lead you through the passages of the Star and Garter at Richmond, and out on to the beautiful garden terrace that overlooks the valley of the winding Thames. It was still somewhat too early for lunch, and the smart and sensible people who "Remember the Sabth day for to keep it highly," as Little Johnnie rendered the Third Commandment, were only just arriving; but there was one distinguished guest already on the terrace, gazing meditatively at the boats on the water far below. It was the Duke of Teck. On hearing footsteps behind him, the Duke turned round, and, recognising Phil, greeted him most cordially; whatever Phil's reply may have been it is immaterial to the story. Then there came a lull in the conversation, which the biscuit-man broke up with the obviously sensible inquiry:

"Phil, wha' d'yer say to a bottle o' P. J.? An' p'raps yer friend—I didn't catch his name—will do us the honour o' joinin' us?"

Inasmuch as the hospitable fellow started then and there for the buffet of the hotel, there was nothing for it but to follow him, which Phil and the Duke accordingly did. It was as the wine was being poured out by a tall and stately barmaid that Phil turned to the Duke with:

"Permit me, sir, to introduce my friend; Mr ——, the Duke of Teck."

The Duke bowed most courteously, but the biscuit-man only glared in amazement. He had been a late arrival at the Savage on the previous night and had

not encountered the club's guest. And now, coming face to face with a real Duke, alive and in the meat, thus suddenly, so rattled him that for several seconds he did not notice the visiting-card which the Duke proffered him. When, finally, he saw the pasteboard, he grabbed it ungracefully, and in awkward confusion ran his hands through all his pockets in a fruitless search for his own card-case.

"Damn that feller Perkins!" he growled, as pocket after pocket was drawn blank; "I shall hand him the order o' the boot as soon as I get home. Phil, remind me to sack him, will yer? I tell yer, yer lordship—I mean yer royal highness—I pay my man bigger wages than many a prince o' the blood, yet he can't valet a gentleman for nuts! Ah, what's this—no—no bet! Here—I have it—Miss, gi' me a penny abernethy biscuit."

The girl smiled scornfully, but complied. Then the merry tradesman grabbed the floury disc from the glass dish-cover in which the girl presented it and read aloud the inscription stamped upon it.

"There, that's my name, yer royal highness—the second one. If yer don't mind acceptin' this in lieu of a card——"

And, determined that it should be so, he grabbed the left front of the Duke's frock-coat, and, pulling it open, stuffed the biscuit forcibly into the Duke's breast-pocket!

Ducal is as ducal does, and Teck accepted the stodge with princely obsequiousness; but supposing he had been run down by a fly as he strolled down Richmond Hill, what a story the society gossips might have spun round a Royal Duke found dead with a penny abernethy in his pocket.

CHAPTER III.

Judicial sapience on trial—Charlie Head's tame Count—The Jubilee Juggins bets in 'ready'—A 'skinner' at old Goodwood—Dalham's Chesterfield Cup—Shillelagh's Hunt Cup—Attila makes atonement—Shifter reaps the benefit—Of Charlie Head's gratitude to heaven!—Old Tom Jennings bars Donovan—Donovan is beaten in the Guineas—The cucumber coolness of Tom Cannon—Lord Suffolk waxes epigrammatic—A memory of Cremorne's Derby—John Percival plays Brer Rabbit—But is brought to book—No confidence, no sympathy!—The levelling influences of the Turf—The Duchess of Montrose and the card-sellers—How the Duchess learned of Gay Hermit's defeat—I essay the breaking of Tattersall's—Jockeys' mounts—A harebrained syndicate—At Leicester races—Archer wins on Panic—An anguished settlement—A rabid systematician and—His *dernier ressort*.

"NEVER take a cheque from a bookmaker!"

The imbecility of such a resolution takes precedence of that of a pet lamb in a travelling circus threatening to bite the tiger; yet, word for word, this sapient observation fell from the lips of Mr Justice Grantham, sitting at the Suffolk Assizes at Ipswich. It was one of the favourite axioms of the late Captain James Octavius Machell that "No matter how clever an owner may be, the jockeys will beat him", and it is an equal certainty that the enduring sovereignty of "Six-to-four-the-field" will beat ninety-nine backers out of a hundred in the long run. Plungers of all sizes will ever receive a ready welcome from the Ring.

True, some toads are fatter than others, but from the viewpoint of the stork all are alike. Be they noblemen or fish-porters—and one of these waged serious war with Tattersall's some twenty years ago, betting in 'ready' and carrying bank-notes to the value of thousands inside the lining of his old cloth hat—'the book' invariably swallows them at the finish—if they are game enough to stay for that consummation. For, be it observed, some of them do *not*—to wit, a certain Austrian Count who, once upon a time, used to plunge with the late lamented Charlie Head. For many weeks a strong tide of good luck carried the Count upon its crested waves and he touched up Head's book to a pretty figure; but there came along a Newmarket Second October in which the proud Austrian got it where the bottle got the cork. According to Charlie's settling-book, all his strayed thousands came back to roost that week, bringing many others along with them, joint facts which caused Charles to be more than usually gracious when, by accident, he met the Count in High Street, Newmarket, on the Saturday morning.

"Ah, my dear Count," cried Head, with his most courtly bow, "I was just about to take a glass of wine before travelling to London. Will you do me the honour of joining me?"

"Viz plaisir, viz mooch plaisir," replied the Count most cheerily; then adding in a distinctly graver tone, "But öh! my dear Mistaire Head, you haf not heard, I presume, of ze mos' dreadful blow which has befallen me? Ah, eet is mos' shöcking!"

"Dear me! Count," exclaimed Head, acting beautifully, "not a *domestic* blow, I hope?"

"Vell, vhat you call 'do-mestic' I do not know,"

replied the noble, shrugging his shoulders; "but I haf Taken ze Knock!"

And that is one of the few points in which the backer has a distinct advantage over the bookmaker. For when a bookmaker takes the knock he must either leave off eating or take to welshing. When a plunger runs amuck it is entirely different. To the absence of his account from the corner on Monday he supplements a half-hearted promise to give 'em a bit as soon as he gets some; in the meantime he proposes to go into the big ring and bet 'ready.' Fifteen years ago there was a good but foolish fellow who, not satisfied at dissipating a quarter of a million in gambling, actually wrote a novel in order to explain how he achieved his own ruin. This book literally breathed contrition in every page, and even wound up with the statement that, if ever the writer should possess money again, his experiences in the past would be found to have proved highly advantageous to him. Yet the book was no sooner out than its author was blowing-in his profits in the old sweet way in Tattersall's Ring. Up he came to Dick Dunn—Dick who has such a ready nomenclature for all customers.

"What price Greywell, Dick?"

"Tens, ready—eights, trust."

"Twenty to two," responded the erstwhile plunger, forking out his couple.

"Twenty to two, Greywell," chortled Dunn to his clerk, "and the number is——" Here he raised his eyes from the tickets in his right hand and gazed for a second at the young man, continuing—"Good Lord!—and the number is Two Hundred an' Fifty Thou' in Two Years!"—which was the title of the spendthrift's book.

Taking the knock is happily—I say happily because I am of a soft-hearted disposition and hate to hear of anybody being either 'knocked' or 'hammered'; personally I would not speak unkindly to a stuffed parrot—of greater rarity to-day than was the case a quarter of a century ago. The attenuated Forfeit Lists prove that. Yet one never hears the bookies do anything but grumble, a circumstance which tempts me to reproduce a page of poor Charlie Head's Goodwood book of '74, now, I rejoice to say, for the sake of the memories it awakens, in my possession.

GOODWOOD, 1874.

CHESTERFIELD CUP.

40	10	Napolitain	Ramsden.
100	25	"	T. Holmes.
90	10	Chingachgook	"
1200	100	Tichborne	E. Tattersall.
20	5	Napolitain	Thorne.
200	25	Daniel	Clinch.
100	12½	"	"
200	25	"	Dashwood.
50	5	Thorn	"
1200	100	Blanchefleur	Whitaker.
20	5	Napolitain	Lord Westmoreland.
80	10	Daniel	Watson.
100	10	Thorn	Beddington.
100	10	Bertram	"
110	10	Thorn	Clinch.
100	10	Chingachgook	Joe Slack.
1000	50	Peeping Tom	Sir William Milner.
100	10	Chingachgook	Emmerson.
100	20	Chingachgook and Daniel	Bob Rogers.
100	25	Napolitain	Mannington.
275	25	Bertram	Col. Maddox.
500	40	Thorn	H. Savile.
225	25	Tichborne	J. Hoare.
175	25	Blanchefleur	Bob Bignell.
1200	100	Flower of Dorset	Gerald Sturt.
600	50	"	"

GOODWOOD, 1874.—CHESTERFIELD CUP—*continued.*

600	50	Thorn . . .	E. W. Walker.
250	25	Tichborne . .	R. Harrison.
1000	100	Daniel . . .	E. F. Blake.
900	200	Napolitain . .	Lord Rosebery.
1100	100	Bertram . . .	Sir J. Astley.
275	25	„ . . .	Sir R. Peel.
250	25	Tichborne . .	R. Harrison.
100	25	Napolitain . .	T. Drake.
300	24	Thorn . . .	C. Cunningham.
75	5	Victoria Alexandra	T. Drake.
200	50	Napolitain . .	H. Coventry.
100	10	Bertram . . .	Sir J. Astley.
70	10	Blanchefleur . .	J. Winder.
40	10	Napolitain . .	Col. Fludyer.
10	120	Bertram . . .	J. K. Ingham.
100	10	„ . . .	Prince Soltykoff.
20	5	Napolitain . .	R. M. Davies.
40	10	„ . .	H. Wilson.
50	5	Bertram . . .	C. Townley.
40	10	Napolitain . .	A. Coventry.
100	25	„ . .	G. Harland.
60	5	Thorn . . .	C. Howard.
100	10	Chingachgook .	Major Kane.
200	16	Thorn . . .	W. Raine.
1000	50	Manille . . .	Col. Knox.
200	18	Daniel . . .	Sam Hopkinson.
1400	140	Chingachgook .	J. Bayliss.
100	15	Bertram . . .	Downay.
90	10	Chingachgook .	Westrop.
180	12	Daniel . . .	W. M. Redfern.
200	25	Blanchefleur . .	Lord Lascelles.
2000	60	Miss Hawthorn colt	John Foy.
275	25	Flower of Dorset .	Lord Hartington.
125	25	Napolitain . .	J. Gideon.
200	25	Blanchefleur . .	George Payne.
200	25	„ . .	Sir J. Astley.
200	10	Miss Hawthorn colt	E. Tattersall.
100	10	Tichborne . .	C. Davison.
40	10	Napolitain . .	Lawley.
200	20	Thorn . . .	John Forsythe.
50	5	Flower of Dorset .	H. Maitland.
2000	90	Aldrich . . .	Bob Lee.
200	8	Victoria Alexandra	F. Leleu.
80	10	Thorn . . .	C. Cooper.
100	8	Flower of Dorset .	George Payne.
100	30	Napolitain . .	H. Steele.

GOODWOOD, 1874.—CHESTERFIELD CUP—*continued*.

60	10	Blanchefleur . .	C. A. Day.
100	15	Bertram . . .	H. Chaplin.
100	10	Tichborne . .	H. Doherty.
200	8	Victoria Alexandra .	John Forsythe.
100	4	„ .	S. Marshall.
50	10	Blanchefleur . .	T. Drake.
65	5	Daniel . . .	Buck.
1000	50	Manille . . .	Lord Aylesford.
100	5	Victoria Alexandra .	Col. Foster.
40	5	Chingachgook .	Col. Forester.
30	10	Napolitain . .	C. Warburton.
125	25	Blanchefleur . .	H. Chaplin.
75	25	Napolitain . .	Sir W. Throckmorton
100	25	Blanchefleur . .	H. Chaplin.
10	50	„ . .	J. Robinson.
1000	30	Lowlander . .	C. Gerard.
250	25	„ . .	Oswald.

£2380½

To spare the middle-aged reader a vexatious effort of memory and the youthful the trouble of reference, I here 'present,' as Mr Charles Frohman would say, the official return of the race:

The Chesterfield Cup (handicap) value 300 sov. by subscription of 15 sov. each, with 100 sov. added, the surplus to the winner; Craven Course, a mile and a quarter (57 subs.—955*l*.).

Mr T. Smith's Dalham, by Cathedral, 3 yrs., 5st. 12lb. Mills 1
Mr Johnstone's b. c. by Blinkhoolie, out of Miss Hawthorn, 3 yrs., 6st. 2lb. . . . . Thompson 2
Sir F. Johnstone's Flower of Dorset, 4 yrs., 7st. 12lb. Newhouse 3
Mr H. Bird's Lowlander, 4 yrs., 10st. 7lb. . . Morris –
Mr R. N. Batt's Thorn, 4 yrs., 9st. 7lb. . J. Osborne –
Mr Lefevre's Manille, 6 yrs., 9st. 4lb. . . . Fordham –
Mr A. C. Barclay's Bertram, 5 yrs., 9st. . . Jewitt –
Ld. Rosebery's Aldrich, 3 yrs., 8st. . . . Constable –
Mr Somerville's Tichborne, 4 yrs., 7st. 7lb. . . Mordan –
Ld. Wilton's Napolitain, 5 yrs., 7st. 6lb. . . Glover –

Capt. Cooper's Maréchal Niel, 3 yrs., 7st. 4lb. . H. Covey –
Mr Merry's Daniel, 3 yrs., 7st. 4lb. . . . A. Wood –
Mr Wallace's Hessleden, 4 yrs., 7st. 3lb. . . Morbey –
Ld. Falmouth's Blanchefleur, 3 yrs., 6st. 12lb. . F. Archer –
Ld. Calthorpe's Mohican (late Chingachgook), .
3 yrs., 6st. 8lb. . . . . W. Clay –
Mr W. S. Cartwright's Victoria Alexandra, 4 yrs., 6st. Major –
Mr F. Fisher's Alexandra, 3 yrs., 5st. 10lb. . . C. Archer –

100 to 30 agst. Napolitain, 5 to 1 agst. Blanchefleur, 7 to 1 each agst. Bertram and Mohican, 100 to 12 agst. Thorn, 12 to 1 each agst. Flower of Dorset and Tichborne, 20 to 1 each agst. Manille, Daniel, and Miss Hawthorn colt, 25 to 1 each agst. Aldrich, Victoria Alexandra, and Dalham, and 33 to 1 agst. Lowlander. Won by a length, two lengths between the second and third.

If there is one thing that will strike the careful reader sooner than another it will surely be that the vivacious Charles performed the highly satisfactory operation known as skinning the lamb. He had £2380, 10s. field money on his book, and never wrote the winner's name! Many other beautiful deductions —including how Mr John Foy nearly brought off a good thing with the Miss Hawthorn colt; how Lord Rosebery was second only to Johnnie Gideon in getting points over the odds; how Sir William Milner had his bit on a dead 'un—may be charitably left to the meditative; but it should not pass unnoticed how Head, in two instances, covered himself at a profit, because that was a feature of the great game at which he had no parallel. The most cursory glance at the figures will show how he took twelve tenners Bertram of J. K. Ingham, and laid Prince Soltykoff ten; and how, after laying the Squire of Blankney four ponies Blanchefleur, he instantly turned and took five tenners back of John Robinson.

But I would give a still more striking instance of

Charles's grand *finesse* in this direction. In the Royal Hunt Cup at Ascot in '88 (eleven months before his death) he made a book for Attila and backed it for the owner. By the hardest luck in the world Attila was beaten by a neck by Shillelagh. The colt was, however, still in the High Weight Handicap run on the Friday, and, as soon as the numbers went up for that race, Charles set the market, the cream of which he proposed presently to skim, by offering seventy to forty on the field, and twos bar Attila. Up to this time no other bookmaker—'Perishers' Head was very fond of calling them when they hung back—had made an offer, but the instant that Charles, getting no response to his first offer, opened out to, "Well, two hundred to one on the field?" he was shot for it from the enclosure. Then, and only then, did the 'perishers' come out with "The field a hundred, the field a hundred!" At this the wily Charles affected some surprise. "No, no," said he, pretending to be huffed, "not while I have a pound in the bank will I stand *that!* Here," raising his voice to its highest pitch, "*two monkeys* to one on the field; now, then, I'll see what you're made of!"

The bait took instantly and completely. With one accord the 'gullish herd,' to borrow a pet phrase from the sporting editor of *Truth*, jumped to the conclusion that Attila was a wrong 'un and that Charles had got it to lay against; he, of all others, had never been known to pepper a horse without good reason. The hint was enough. Immediately offers of "A hundred to forty on the field!" rang out on every side and—were as promptly snapped up by a dozen of Head's agents who had been expressly 'put in' for that particular purpose. Attila won in a canter, and

Charlie Head, by throwing away that two hundred, had drawn in about six thousand!

And here do I take leave to make a slight digression in memory of this selfsame Charlie Head. Before me lies a letter of his, dated "Monte Carlo, 6th March 1887," and addressed to Shifter. For some years Shifter, the most hapless wight at backing horses that ever nodded to a fielder, had been in Head's book for a much larger sum than he could ever have hoped to have in his possession all at one time. But this in no way interfered with Charlie's fondness for the little man; on the contrary, I think that he deplored the fact rather more than Shifter did. For in this kindly epistle Head, after telling with no little force of the terrible earthquakes which had just then rent and shaken Monte Carlo to its very foundations; after describing how it felt to be "suddenly awakened out of a deep sleep, to feel an unseen enemy grasping us in a terrible grip and seeking to shake every atom of life out of us; to witness the pale faces of poor helpless women, as well as brave men, who did their utmost to give confidence, yet not knowing what was to follow"; concludes with, "My chequered life has now had added to it a series of earthquake experiences from which I have emerged safely, but, I am not ashamed to confess, shaken. AND IN GRATITUDE FOR THESE BENEFITS I CORDIALLY AGREE TO WIPE OUT THAT OLD SCORE FROM MY SLATE, AND LET BYGONES BE BYGONES."

Shifter read this letter to a select gathering in Romano's amidst loud and long cheers, for, as he very sagely observed, "One more earthquake and we shall all be back in the ring again."

But, harking back to the Attila *coup*, the 'perishers'

were even more consummately puzzled, I remember, in the following spring, when, seemingly without reason or provocation, rare old John Percival got up in the ring at Newmarket and strenuously opposed one of the hottest Guineas favourites that ever ran over the Rowley Mile, to wit, Donovan.

In those halcyon days (for it is unfortunately no secret that the life's savings of John Percival have since been swept away from him by a series of events entirely disconnected with the turf, and so strangely luckless that the average reader would flatly discredit them. Happily the old sportsman, now close on seventy-seven, supports his reverses with the most enviable philosophy) John kept his lodgings at Newmarket, and on most nights was joined at dinner by the same old friend, Mr Thomas Jennings the elder, far more generally called 'Old Tom Jennings.' Never were there, surely, such merry little dinners as these! For each old boy had a keen appreciation of the humorous in life, and each could put away a bottle of whisky and still go to roost with a clear head. On this particular eve of the Two Thousand, then, when the decanters had been substituted for the dishes, and the parlour-maid had grouped the tumblers, and the cigar-boxes, and the soda-water bottles as seriously and silently as a scene-shifter at Covent Garden setting the second act of *Lucia*, the veterans came straight to the subject of 'the first of the classics,' and especially to the chance of the favourite. Now the Duke of Portland's beautiful bay colt Donovan had been an exceptionally firm favourite for the Derby all through the winter, and now, on April the 9th, he stood at but 5 to 4 for that race, and at the famine price of 100 to 30 for the Guineas. In reality

the colt had met with about as much genuine opposition as is usually accorded the individual who is called in to shave a corpse; in the vernacular of the course the race was all over bar shouting. Imagine, therefore, the surprise, if not the consternation, of John Percival when Jennings, bringing his fist down upon the table with a bang that caused the tumblers to jingle together, exclaimed conclusively:

"Mark my words, John, if Donovan wins the Guineas to-morrow afternoon, I shall turn up training, sell my house and furniture, and leave Newmarket!"

Buckle has said that the ability to predict consequences is the highest and ripest form of human wisdom, and so great was Percival's faith in the judgment of his old friend that, "his not to make reply, his not to reason why," he simply smoked on in meditative silence. His intelligent nostrils had divined the odour of a rodent, but had not yet classified it. Jennings, feeling perhaps that so drastic a condemnation was open to misconstruction, presently added:

"Mind you, John, the stable is as sweet as sugar on the horse and thinks defeat impossible; but I'm an old soldier and make good use of my eyes. Not only is the *horse* fat, but, damme! the *jockey's* fat as well; and if *that* combination can win a Two Thousand, then it's time I got out of the business!"

The unfitness of Fred Barrett, poor fellow, to which Mr Jennings alluded, had less to do with mere adiposity than with high rolling. To many of us not hopelessly sunk in the sordid vice of money-grubbing, sudden success seems to call for sudden relaxation, and even occasional indulgence in the jamboree is not a good thing for a fashionable light-weight jockey. (Nor, for that matter, is jamboree a good dictionary

word. But, should you fail to find it in Johnson or Webster, be good enough to consider that, like James Whitcomb Riley, who dubbed the domestic hen a 'settin' oviparang,' I have performed a distinguished service to the vocabulary.)

John Percival pondered long and seriously over old Jennings' words, long after that worthy had returned to Lagrange House; and he went to bed with his mind made up.

On the fateful afternoon which followed, the field for the Guineas consisted of Mr Abington's Pioneer, Mr Hamar Bass's Ma Belle colt, Lord Bradford's Swift, Mr Gretton's Miguel, Mr Jennings' George, Mr Milner's Homely, Prince Soltykoff's Gold, Mr Douglas Baird's Enthusiast, and the mighty Donovan—nine runners. The only cry that arose from the ring was the familiar "Ten to one bar one!" with which race-goers are familiar when speculation has virtually dried up. In monotonous cadence the offer was bellowed again and again, until a few adventurous spirits were tempted to make a cockboat of Pioneer on the off-chance of anything happening to the favourite. It was during a brief lull in this spiritless dealing that John Percival opened his chest and roared out:

"I'll take nine thousand to two, once."

Several of the swells within earshot in the Jockey Club enclosure turned round in astonishment, whilst Percival's brother 'perishers' gazed at him in open-mouthed confusion of thought. What could possibly be amiss with the favourite without all the world knowing of it? Three or four gentlemen approached Percival at once, but it was Sir Humphrey de Trafford who made the first inquiry.

"Will you take four thousand to a thousand, Percival?" he asked.

"I'll split the difference with you, Sir Humphrey," replied John; "say four and a quarter?"

"I'll lay it to you!" and Percival of Panton Street wrote down 1000—4250. Other wagers at the same odds instantly followed, and were still being taken with avidity when the ringing of the electric bell announced the start. To give, in any book of sporting reminiscences, but a condensed description of a race of the importance of the Two Thousand is, I am well aware, contrary to all precedent, but a righteous writer regardeth the life of his reader. Though many supposed experts described it at the time as a fast-run race, its record stands out as the worst, bar three, in history. George made running, in the centre, from Gold, Miguel, and Donovan, with Enthusiast, ridden by that model of quiet self-possession, Tom Cannon, lying last. During the next two furlongs George dropped back, and Enthusiast, steadily overhauling six of his opponents, took third place. As they raced past the Bushes, Gold was seen to be in trouble, and, shortly afterwards, Swift cracked; not that anybody cared one fig about such trifles. Coming to the top of the hill Donovan forced his way to the front, but both he and his jockey appeared to be blown, whereas Cannon, on Enthusiast, had now passed Miguel and got to the favourite's girths. It was no four to one on Donovan *now!* A few seconds more, seconds in which hearts stood still and the only sound that broke the tension of the awful silence was the crack of the whip on the favourite's quarters, and Tom Cannon, timing his supreme effort to the psychological instant, got up

and won by the distance he dearly loved — a head.

Of what followed the imaginative can judge; and yet Tom Cannon, as he slipped from the saddle in the Birdcage, and, with a quiet 'Whoa, lad,' unbuckled his horse's girths, retained his placidity and was alone unmoved. The late Mr John Comyns Cole painted an immortal picture of Tom Cannon in fifty words when (on a later occasion) he wrote: "The triumphs of the racecourse—the close finish, the roar of thousands of voices, the hearty congratulations—all this is doubtless felt by the calm, collected-looking man who rides back to the door of the weighing-room with no light of battle in his eye or flush of victory on his cheek; but he makes no sign."

What particular strife agitated Jupiter and Venus and Mars and Uranus, and all the rest of the planets on that date, only Heaven and David Christie Murray may know, but it was indeed a day of disaster on the racecourse. For Donovan missed a moral certainty, Fred Barrett lost a winning mount in the Derby (the black and white jacket passing to Tommy Loates), and, as the sun was setting, Robert the Devil, a Derby winner, was dying. Or as Lord Suffolk observed when the Duke of Portland won the race that immediately followed the Guineas (a private sweepstakes of 300 sovs.) with Ulva:

"Providence sees her egregious error and hastens to repair it."

Pray, what did you observe, sir? Robert the Devil did *not* win the Derby? Then, sir, with all respect I join issue with you. Did you see the race? Are you quite certain that, having been privileged to be a witness of that memorable struggle, you were not at

the actual moment helping a lady to some pigeon pie or something? You, who call yourself a racing man, too!

But perhaps the most amusing evidence of the irrepressible optimism of the human mind is supplied by the adventure of John Percival with the late Lord Dudley. His lordship, meeting John in Piccadilly on an afternoon in May 1872, casually asked what price the backers were taking about Cremorne for the Derby. Now the veering odds on forthcoming events were not then, as now, published hour by hour; the world, indeed, got such news mostly on Saturdays. Bearing this fact well in mind, John (whose wonderful nerve never deserts him; he might safely be backed to jump a rainbow if somebody would steady it for him) replied that four to one was about the proper price; there was a ton of money for the horse. *En parenthèse*, the old boy had that very afternoon covered some money at sevens; but, in racing, the largest plums do not fall to the honest three-shilling labourer who drags the granite roller up and down the Straight Mile for ten hours at a stretch, and then goes home so balled up that he seems to walk on all fours, nearly so frequently as to the brain-worker who has breakfasted with the owner of the horse that whips round when the webbing flies up and then comes in eleventh.

"Very well, Percival," said Lord Dudley, "I will take you four monkeys."

From that time until Derby Day Percival did not set eyes on Lord Dudley. At Epsom, however, just as the numbers were going up for the great race, his lordship came down the steps of the Jockey Club Stand and stood gazing at the long line of shouting fielders.

"Good day, m'lord," cried Percival; "what do you want to do?"

"Nothing much, Percival," answered Lord Dudley, languidly, "though a lady has asked me to put fifty pounds on Marshal Bazaine for her. What will you lay?"

"A thousand to fifty, my lord," replied John, giving the price an affectionate squeeze as usual.

"All right, put it down."

The result of that Derby is ancient history now. Cremorne (Maidment) won, Couronne de Fer (Tom Chaloner) was second, and Queen's Messenger (French) third. In those good old times the Derby settling at Tattersall's occupied two days, the Monday *and* the Tuesday; but one of the earliest arrivals on the Monday afternoon was Lord Dudley's private secretary, who drove up to 'The Corner' in a smart brougham and met Percival in the little office where horses and carriages sold at auction are 'cleared.'

"Now, Mr Percival," said the urbane secretary, pulling out his pocket-book, "Lord Dudley has to pay you fifty pounds over a horse called Marshal Bazaine, I believe?"

"Perfectly correct, sir," replied John of the wonderful nerve, feeling in his very bones that something unusual was about to happen and, metaphorically, putting a curb-bit on his emotions.

"Then that will be it," continued the secretary, withdrawing a roll of fresh bank-notes from his wallet and peeling off five tenners.

Ye Gods on high Olympus! His lordship, then, always somewhat eccentric and forgetful, had clean forgotten his four monkeys about the winner. In Percival's situation no man could have kept absolute

silence; the safety-valve of speech had to be opened. So John observed, as he folded up the notes :

"His lordship is very well, I hope?"

"Very well indeed, sir," answered the affable officer.

"I am rejoiced to hear it ; long may he remain so!" responded Percival with the illogical spontaneity of the courtiers of the Old Testament, who never received a royal benefit without singing out, "O king, live for ever!" Charging the courteous *employé* with many respectful messages to his lordship, John bade him good day ; and after a bottle of the best that the little house round in Montpelier Street afforded, went home in two hansoms.

Then Ascot, that strangely variegated mixture of women and horses, of grace and vulgarity, came and passed away, followed suit by the blistering 'July's' behind the Ditch at Newmarket. Throughout gummy August the plebeians and the society selling-platers, who are called in to act as stewards when the real articles are away shooting or fishing, battled on at Brighton and at Lewes, even up to York ; and then came dear, stinking old Doncaster. To the insufficiency and general unwholesomeness of the hotels of Doncaster is due the fact that all sensible persons who have been over the ground once, elect, on their second visit, to put up in 'private' diggings. It was so with John Percival. In the modest villa of which he paid the year's rent for about eight days' actual occupancy with attendance, he could have his meals in comfort and spend his nights in peace, instead of being compelled to eat where others were fighting, and to sleep in the next room to a friendly poker party where racing gentlemen were choking

other racing gentlemen and taking it away from them.

On the morning of the Leger day of '72 John was finishing off his breakfast with a little fruit, when the noise of horses and of wheels coming to a stoppage in the road outside caused him to jump up from the table and look out through the lace curtains. It was Lord Dudley and Sir Charles Forbes who had driven up in a dog-cart.

As the little country slavey led the unexpected visitors into the room, John produced from the side-board samples of as many choice vintages as one would find on an ordinarily smart restaurant's wine-list; but though Sir Charles and his lordship were affability personified, they would touch nothing.

"Do you divine the object of my visit, Percival?" his lordship asked, and John said that he did not indeed. He was only too pleased, he added, to receive a call from his lordship at any time, without seeking a reason. It was prettily and delicately expressed, but John did not shout it as if through a megaphone. His lordship swallowed the butter without comment, and immediately observed, quite dispassionately:

"I have called for my two thousand pounds!"

"Why—of course!" replied Percival, instantly, though his pulse changed step three times, and his heart left its moorings and soared from his mediastinum to his mouth as he spoke. "If you will be seated for two minutes, I will run up to my bedroom and fetch it."

John's instant and cheerful acquiescence was in the highest degree artistic. In racing metaphor, he saw his number in the frame, and knew that the whole

credit of the stable was at stake. Or, if that is not distinctly luminous, it was up to him to dribble the ball or get off the field. To have complied grudgingly would have been to commit prompt professional suicide. It took something less than three minutes, therefore, to transfer a bolt of paper currency for twenty hundred from the little iron safe in the bedroom to the breeches pocket of the Earl of Dudley, and this without the utterance of a single word, just for all the world as though any other than thirteen-week settlements were absolutely unknown.

When a man can expect no sympathy in any other quarter, he looks for some at home, but even this was not forthcoming. Per contra, John's *placens uxor*, who had already been given a carriage horse that cost a monkey in celebration of a mysterious win, sternly and virtuously observed:

"Serves you jolly well right for not telling me the whole truth at the time!" As for Lord Dudley, he was betting freely with Percival as soon as the pair met on the much-overrated Town Moor, and the incident of the long-drawn hold-over most probably passed clean out of his mind with the receipt of his money. Grudges between racing men are much more frequently found in sporting novels than in real life, for the very atmosphere of the racecourse is opposed to churlishness and resentment, despite its many levelling influences. Nor did I ever see this great truth more amusingly illustrated than at a certain Newmarket Second October meeting nearly twenty years ago. Four persons stood upon a grass mound on the far side of the Rowley Mile to watch the race for the Cesarewitch; one was a lady and three were mere men. The lady, round of form and rubicund of

visage, but the personification of dignity always, was Caroline, Duchess of Montrose. Two of the men were poor, ragged, bootless card-sellers; the third male was myself. It was a brief period of perfect silence, for the betting had ceased, and every pair of eyes, whether glued to a raceglass or not, was turned in the direction of the gap in the lands through which the horses, already started on their journey, would presently appear. The intensity of the silence was all the greater from the fact that it had been a very heavy gambling race, and more than one prominent man's future was supposed to be hanging in the balance; when suddenly, without any prelude, one of the card-sellers, who clearly had been labouring under a strong sense of injury, turned to the other and growled:

"You'd fink, if you paid as high as fippence for yer bed, yer trahsers 'ud be safe, wouldn't yer?"

As for the next five or six minutes the Duchess was shaking like a corn-flour *blanc mange*, her impression of that Cesarewitch must have been somewhat imperfect; but she was a sportswoman before everything, and I beg leave to think that the Turf could do with a few more of her sort to-day. I remember seeing her driving in Regent Street, just down by the County Fire Office, one afternoon, behind a pair of matched hackneys that Mr Burdett Coutts would get sixteen or eighteen hundred for. It was about the hour at which our principal thoroughfares ring with "All 'er winners!" and, as the Duchess's barouche was about to sweep across Piccadilly Circus, her ladyship jerked the coachman's cord so suddenly that he pulled round and nearly knocked down the rozzer in the mackintosh suit who was regulating the traffic from the middle of the road.

"James," cried the Duchess, as seventy-three inches of plush and powder slid off the box and came running to the side of the carriage, "just get me a *Star*, but be sure that it has the 4.40 winner."

Instantly the footman intercepted one of the flying newsboys.

"Got the winner o' the four-forty, boy?"

"Not in print, cully," blurted the breathless youth, grabbing the offered penny, and holding out a crumpled envelope with some pencil scrawlings on it, "but this is straight orf the tape, gawdstrikemedead! Whitelock — Gay 'Ermit — Kingwood — five ran — a 'underd to thirty the winner—Barrett rode!"

As the flunkey forcibly grabbed the paper, and, returning to his noble mistress, read out the result, the Duchess only sniffed in a dissatisfied feminine way—for Gay Hermit was her horse, and nine months later he won the Hunt Cup in a deluge of rain; but the astonished newsboy stood in the roadway with his eyes wide open and his mouth unclasped, long after the glittering carriage had disappeared amongst the traffic in the Quadrant. That the Duchess's heart was wholly in racing, in more than one sense, was proved by the matrimonial overtures she made to Fred Archer; advances which he would probably have accepted but for the sound, common-sense 'talking to' he got from fine old Mat Dawson. For Archer, as for the Duchess, I entertain a most kindly remembrance, for, all unconsciously—as well as otherwise—he did me more than one good turn.

Once upon a summer time I was incited to essay the breaking up of Tattersall's Ring, though not, primarily, with my own money. Mine own ambition soars not so high as to attempt the solution of so

strenuous a problem, but I fell in with some fellows with a supposed invulnerable 'system.' There were four of them—three prosperous West End tradesmen and their friend the licensed victualler at the corner pin—and they had tested the scheme both uppards and downards, and backards and forrards, till they felt satisfied that they had got a dead sure thing; the only wonder was that all the sharps on the course were not following it. It subsequently turned out to have been the fantastic invention of a lunatic, the discredit of whose birth was vehemently disclaimed by seven metropolitan parishes; but that, as the distinguished novelist observes, is another piece of pidgin entirely. The idea, which consisted in backing certain jockeys over their best courses, of beginning with ten pounds and doubling each losing stake, and in never, under any circumstances, laying odds on, did not strike me as surprisingly new. Consequently, though the plot was not unfolded to me in the bar parlour of a favourite tavern of mine until close on midnight, I had, before closing time, signed four different agreements, by each and all of which I bound myself, in consideration of a promise of ten per cent. on winnings and two guineas a day for exes, to begin operating, without anæsthetics, on the Ring at Sandown on the following day. It was at no suggestion of mine that I signed so many sheepskins. An abiding faith in all mankind may be my greatest and most honourable error, but the sealing-wax scarlet of Somerset House ink is flattering to the vanity of the commercial mind.

To Sandown Park I went on a Friday morning to back the mounts of my friend Charles Wood. The ten and the twenty went down, but the forty came

up at five to two. On a win we returned to the original stake. Another ten went down, then a twenty came up at nine to four. I returned to town with a clear profit of ninety-five sovereigns, and I and the three tradesmen had to sit on the licensed victualler to keep him down, since he figured out that he had been losing about twenty-seven hundred a month for nearly four months through not beginning at Lincoln. On the Saturday Wood won the first race at five to four, and the second at three to one. He lost in the third, didn't ride in the fourth, won the fifth at two to one, and then turned it up for the afternoon. This showed a profit of £72, 10s., or £167, 10s. on the two days. After cashing in, I started home with about twenty guineas, a bottle of rare old brandy, a new silk umbrella, and a Christchurch salmon about as big as the 'Horse Shoe,' though the average must be struck at a little less than this, for I lost the umbrella and the salmon, and reached my lodgings chalked all over like a Pierrot through trying to pick up the game of snooker-pool at the Savoy with a future brother-in-law, who was supposed to be walking the wards at Charing Cross Hospital.

On the reassembling of the syndicate on the Monday afternoon there was a slight breeze of dissension, but for which the very incident which makes this story would never have happened. In checking my accounts by the newspaper returns, the plungers had detected a slight discrepancy, though entirely to their own profit. On Wood's fifth ride at Sandown on the Friday I had credited the congress with a win of forty-five (to twenty), whereas the official return was but two to one. They were good

enough to say that they could "see what I had done" —so could I—but they took the opportunity of warning me that had the betting veered the other way and I had taken a point *under* the odds, they could not have accepted my return. With that preface they had the immortal rind to pull out a fifth document for me to sign, guaranteeing them the starting-price as returned nightly in *The Evening Standard*, neither more nor less.

Of course I signed the thing, but with murder in my heart. The flame of desire which every man should feel within him to stick, however unwillingly, to the uneventful path of rectitude, for a brief period burned low and looked like going out altogether. But as I walked back through Paternoster Row, I bought myself a cardboard wall-sign inscribed with the beautiful apothegm "Silence is Golden," all in a frame of sunflowers and smilax, and I packed it in my Gladstone, just on top of my clean shirts, lest I might temporarily overlook the mighty truth. During the remainder of the afternoon I was effecting a loan with a view to the possibility of the margins going against me, and, thanks to a little inborn plausibility and a knowledge of men which I acquired at a very early age, I caught the 6.45 from St Pancras to Leicester, with a monkey of the Trust's and one hundred and ninety of my own, prepared for any emergency.

There were two days' racing at Leicester, and Archer was our bird. I was, I think, responsible for the selection of Fred Archer. I should like to lay a little wreath upon his grave by taking the sole responsibility. I held, and still hold, the opinion that he was by far the most brilliant horseman of his time,

or since. A fig for the foolish followers of public form who have gone to swell the sad armies of the unsuccessful in our cosy workhouses and cosier prisons; kindly memories of Archer will linger to the end in the minds of the privileged few who knew that if Fred had caused a stuffed tiger or a tin dog to be entered in a race and then put his bunch in to back it, he would surely have been there with the goods.

As I walked across the course at Oadby on that Tuesday morning, Archer overtook and greeted me; but I never did and never do ask any questions on a racecourse, and Frederick volunteered no information. In the first race he rode the horse that finished second, and my syndicate lost a tenner. In the second, he was astride something that appeared to be anchored, so that my systematicians did in another twenty. In the third scramble we were short-headed for forty more, and I began to wonder that a job so satisfying should be so unintelligible. In such circumstances what ought I to do?

The barmaid recommended the black seal at six-and-sixpence the pint, and I took it. Finding it to my liking, and remembering that no bird can fly with only one wing, I saw it again. Meanwhile the clanging of the bell announced the hoisting of the numbers for the fourth race. There were seven runners, of which Mr Gilbert's Vermilion, ridden by the late John Watts, instantly became a hot favourite. A few of the earliest bettors, by snapping like vultures, got on at evens, but within fifty or sixty seconds it was "Take six to four: two to one bar one!" 'Bar one' was Panic, owned by Tom Stevens, and ridden by Archer. On the book it had no chance against Vermilion, and as the money literally poured into

the Ring for that horse, Panic quickly went out to threes. By the light of the market it seemed almost a shame to throw real money away on the horse, and yet my little old hundred and ninety was not quite strong enough to take the risk. A few paces from where I was standing were pitched Alec Harris and the late John Isaacs, and Alec, seeing that I hesitated, called out:

"Here! what do you want to do?"

"Panic," I answered.

"Seven to two, to you?"

"Take you fours?" I haggled.

"Come on then," and he held out his right hand.

"To eighty sovereigns, Alec," said I, pulling out a banknote for a hundred and putting it in his fist.

"No, no!" cried he, thrusting the note back. "Forty to ten if you like; I thought you wanted it for yourself."

"If you only knew what an effort it has cost me to pull it out," I replied, sorrowfully, "your whole day would seem brighter. I'm simply doing this for a syndicate of mugs, and if you won't hold it somebody else must."

That mention of the syndicate settled it: only your experienced turfite comprehends the enormity of the idiocy of backing horses by systems. Alec Harris's answer was embodied in his injunction to his partner:

"Put down three-hundred-an'-twenty to eighty—Binstead."

Only just in time! For in that moment there swept into the ring threescore of breathless men, who had run from the weighing-room as hard as they could come. The illogical frenzy with which they flung themselves upon the bookmakers indicated something

more than the usual stirrup tip. Men ran around the ring, fighting for precedence before each bookie. Then, mad with excitement, scampered from pitch to pitch, trying to force banknotes upon unwilling layers, who, taking the cue, only stood aside and cried "All gone!" Meantime, two placid Nottingham officials hauled down the frame in which the runners' numbers were exhibited and—took out that of Vermilion! He had been kicked by another horse while walking in the paddock, and had fallen so lame that he could not go to the post!

How the 'heads' did gamble when this awful truth leaked out! For, with Vermilion out of the way, the race was as good as a gift for Panic. It was, by the event of the last few seconds, the best thing of the day, and it was seized upon as such not only by men who had previously hesitated, but also by those who had to get out of their Vermilion stakes. Hither and thither they rushed—shouting, struggling, swearing—until the sudden sounding of the starting bugle, blown by a trumpeter of the Leicester regiment perched on the roof of the stand, caused instant silence, just as a whole pondful of croaking frogs are quieted by the plash of a stone.

And when at last the horses came in sight—O, blessed spectacle!—the dear old 'Tinman,' with his back all humped and his head buried in his shoulders, had taken the measure of every one of them! Knowing, intuitively, that one shake-up was as much as his mount would stand, he was saving it all for that last run in, with which he stole so many, many races. His unerring eye had measured the distance to an inch; his knees had gauged the failing stamina of his horse. Within three strides of home Panic

drew clear to his withers—then shot past the post a winner by half a length, and—was immediately overtaken by the bunch of horses he had so cleverly beaten. It was Archer at his very best.

No matter what Alec Harris said when I went and touched him for that four hundred. Let us salute it in silence. And then all roads seemed to lead to the bar where the black seal was dispensed, nor did I have to hoist a flag in order to secure assistance. By the light of later years victory made me vulgarly vociferous, but Dame Fortune loves advertisement, and feels herself cheated by the churl who hides his profits. The deeper to impress this fact upon my ductile mind, she graciously stood by, even as I hung upon that bar setting up the drinks for all comers, and caused Archer to get beaten in two more races, and my syndicate to fall into the net for a further two-hundred-and-forty! I left the course all clogged up with funds, and steering in all directions, ultimately reached Leicester. At the 'George' a telegram from my ill-starred junta awaited me: "*Discontinue investments forthwith. Wire total of amount lost, and meet us luncheon Palmerston one-thirty to-morrow—Bottomley.*"

With as much grace as may be assumed by a commissioner who has made a little over five-and-a-half hundred in the shuffle, I replied "*You lose 310. Will meet you as desired—Binstead.*" Simply that and nothing more. For though a telegram that costs a dollar may flatter the vanity of a fool, the thoughtful man will stop to consider what are the odds that the dollar isn't coming out of his pocket, and frequently the pot cools down and spoils, like a lark-pudding that is not kept simmering.

It was a graceless luncheon and a strained and painful settling-up, yet that miserable faction contained at least one gentleman, who, as Tennyson or somebody else observes, had been "standing anigh the hives just long enough to get stung proper." His name was Graham Ingram, and he was a strange admixture of brains and no-brains. He had sacrificed his youth to morphia and the classics, the baneful effects of which had driven him at thirty into monied matrimony and comfortable keeping in Bayswater. But a widow marrying a middle-aged bachelor is like a once-wrecked boat taking on a skipper that has never been to sea, and poor Mrs Ingram—one more of life's unacknowledged heroines—finding that the coals wouldn't burn, was soon allowing Graham liberal pocket-money and undisputed access to the other side of the house. There Graham fostered and nurtured —and subsequently buried—many a wild bright scheme, assisted by a gaunt but not bad-looking girl, similarly stung by a determination to alter the course of the sun. Whenever they got a new wildcat scheme, they would, metaphorically, join hands and wander off into dreamland together: how could it be expected that two such impressionable novices could withstand the Bottomley methods? The racecourse is all too sunny a prospect for the neophyte to resist, and head over heels into it they went. They familiarised themselves with every method of backing horses that had been exploited—I said exploited, sir; but if you prefer the word exploded, pray substitute it—since racing began, and finally rectified the system on which we had grounded by one which had lain buried since the year of the big frost.

Small need is there to say much more. In the

early summer of 1901 I was on my way to Maidenhead, when, quite by accident, I ran against Ingram at Paddington railway station. By the light in his eyes no less than by his unknotted necktie and dishevelled hair, I judged him to be a little more out of plumb than ever. He drew me into a corner of the booking-office and flourished a newspaper before me. Somewhat unwisely, I asked him how many bookmakers he reckoned he had put out of business, all told.

"To hell with them, and with you too!" he roared. "Look here! The very residence that I require is advertised in this paper. I pray to God that no one else has seen it! Even *you*—whom I partly trust—should not see it now but for the fact that the address of the property is not disclosed; and ere you or anybody else can ascertain it, I shall be in possession!"

With this he unfolded *The Morning Post* of July the 14th (a copy of which I subsequently procured), and gloated and revelled over this advertisement:

> A ROCK-BUILT Crenelated CASTLE, buffeted by the Atlantic surge, at one of the most romantic and dreaded points of our iron-bound coast, in full view of the Deathstone; shipwrecks frequent, corpses common; three reception and seven bed rooms; every modern convenience; 10 gs. a week.—Address B. R., 8853, "Morning Post" office, Strand, W.C.

CHAPTER IV.

The true sportsman and the sham—Of Ara, the blue macaw—How, though he habitually made himself cheap, he subscribed his mite to salmon-fishing—Sanford and Merton *redivivus*—Shifter's reverence for Dickens—A far older authority—A modern parallel to the fifteenth chapter of St Luke—The folly of Fat George—Is reproved by the 'Crimson Rambler'—George repents—And finds a *fidus Achates*—George returns to the paternal roof—But does not stay there long—Dr Gregory Riddle—Takes a ticket in a Derby sweep—As does Mr Walter Sleath—The Hill at Epsom—Unexpected good news—Wily tactics, and—The sequel.

IN these days of flam and pretence, when any individual who desires to be known as 'a good sportsman' may achieve his wish by becoming a member of a betting club, or by giving a guinea towards purchasing a 'presentation belt' for a beslobbered pugilist, it does seem a bit unjust to apply the term to any honest enthusiast who can point to something of his own doing in the world of sport. No matter how humble his contribution—a finger smashed at the wicket, a nose broken in the football field, an eye gone to glory with a drachm of black powder, or a 'thick ear' incurred at the Belsize—there is more merit in the unpretentious donation of the practical zealot than in all the patronage of the club quidnunc, who has so little real sport in his composition that the non-appearance for but one day of *The Sportsman* and *The*

Sporting Life (if one could imagine so dire a calamity befalling mankind) would deprive him of all topics of conversation.

And this is a story of a big blue Asiatic bird, who, however unconsciously, subscribed his mite. Probably he is dead now; possibly his skeleton has been picked clean and set up with wires for the Society's museum in Hanover Square; but in life he used to sit with others of his kind in the Zoological Gardens in Regent's Park. His dwelling was a zinc and wooden T-piece standing on the right-hand side of the gravelled walk which leads from the kangaroo sheds, past the markhores and the elephants, to where the cassowaries then bobbed and strutted, close to Macclesfield Gate. In the sixpenny illustrated catalogue of that happy period they called him *Ara hyacinthina*. He was a great blue beauty with an orange mandible, and, fully conscious of his vast superiority, he sat like a misunderstood Diogenes amongst the mere toucans and colies and barbets, just tolerating the Kaka of New Zealand on account of his being a first family, and politely acknowledging the black cockatoo of Australia, though he privately thought him somewhat quakerish and slow. In all that vast collection of birds and beasts only the two Indian elephants aroused any enthusiasm within the navy-blue breast of Ara: ye gods, if only he had been born an elephant! And whenever old Jung Perchad, or the feminine and less-ponderous Suffa Culli, swung by with their keeper on a fore-breakfast or a last-post constitutional, the gaudy South American, chained by the leg, would make frantic efforts to engage their attention, with his undignified and all too persistent

"Hullo! Hullo! Hullo!"

Not that the big pachyderms ever turned a head or took the slightest notice of Ara; and when their drabby outlines disappeared round the turn to the tunnel, he would ruffle up his feathers and try to compose himself as well as his mighty anger would allow him, as much as to say, "Damn *me* if ever I make myself so cheap again!" To be continually snubbed by those whose lightest patronage we should prize high above some firm friendships we already possess is mortifying to the flesh and hard to bear, but these little lessons are never mastered. When Jung Perchad and Suffa Culli came that way back again, Ara's powdery eyelids would go back with a snap, and he would struggle all the harder to make the "Hullo! Hullo! Hullo!" more inviting than before.

Now, as Ara sat there sunning himself and dreaming of his native palm groves, or gum-tree plantations, or whatever other arboreal boughs he had been accustomed to cotton to, he was in blissful ignorance of one important fact. It was that certain of his tail-feathers were highly prized by piscators who trolled for salmon with a fly. To be sure, piscators were mostly mad; but if the gaudy bird had known about those tail-feathers and the exorbitant prices that were asked for them when made up into salmon-lures by fishing-tackle fakers, Ara might reasonably have been even more conceited than he was. But, as I have already said, he didn't.

Well, years and years ago, on a certain autumnal morning, when the marvellous alchemy of heaven had turned the leaves from green to bronze, two nicely-grown boys of the Eton-jacket age, freshly from school, and full of Greek roots and cigaroots, sought the turnstile at what is called the South Gate

of the Zoological Gardens, and passed the wicket on presentation of two green cardboard tickets. For reasons which, though weighty, do not concern the reader, I must cloak these youths' identity in borrowed nomenclature. I will call the one Master Tommy Merton and the other Master Harry Sanford.

"Straight ahead and turn to your right for the lions, gentlemen," remarked a polite gardener, for in those days the fierce baritone kings of the forest were cooped up where now the bears and the hyænas 'receive'; but the boys only grinned at each other significantly as they struck off down the path which skirts the aviaries of the lofty, high-minded vultures and the haughty and disdainful sea-going eagles, superior birds, which have long since elevated to the level of the sciences the art of looking at an uninvited guest and not seeing him at all.

Arrived opposite the gorgeous Ara, the two boys, smiling almost audibly, peered to the right and to the left to see that nobody was about; as for Ara, he was too used to being rudely stared at to have any apprehension of danger.

"I vow and protest, Harry," said Tommy, undecidedly, as his eyes turned from the resplendent blue parrot to the face of his companion, "that I have a sufficient leaven of basic decency still left in my composition to consider it a shame to despoil this beautiful bird."

"As indeed it would be, dear Tommy," replied Harry, somewhat severely, "if we could get fishing flies without money, but we can't. No one with the faintest knowledge of the Camden Town tradesman, backed by as much intellect as would keep a mussel from entangling itself in its own beard, could for a

moment entertain a notion so grotesque. But if you are going to show the white feather——"

"The blue ones are the more desirable, I think," stammered Master Merton, in haste to cover his apparent cowardice.

"In plain words, if you are going to back out of it," insisted Master Sanford, with ironical austerity, "we may as well write at once to your father, and, whilst thanking him for his courteous invitation, admit that we do not care for any fishing this autumn."

It was enough; Master Merton made up his mind with a gulp.

"Give us hold of the driving-gloves," said he.

The Sanford boy pulled a pair of tan calf gloves out of his breeches pockets and gave them to his companion, who drew them on. Then Sanford asked,

"Have the hedgers too?"

The Merton boy gave an anxious momentary glance at the sleeping Ara's mandible and replied rather hurriedly,

"Yes, yes; I think so."

Out from the frontal fulness of his waistcoat Master Sanford drew a pair of thick gardening gauntlets, which the conspiring Merton adjusted over those already on his chubby hands, and——

At that very moment a keeper strolled round the bushes. As the intelligent officer advanced, the two boys (Tommy with his arms folded carelessly) became deeply and intensely interested in the slumbering Ara, and the man remarked as he passed by,

"Be careful not to go too close, young gentlemen. They won't 'urt you if you don't meddle with 'em, but if they bite you you'll never forget it."

Tommy paled a little at these words, and, as the

man in livery increased his distance, observed, as he began drawing off the hedging-gloves,

"I vow and protest, dear Harry, against taking so much precedence in this adventure. Being the son of as spiritless and vapid a peer as ever flew a kite —a mere accident of birth, which gives a fellow no fair pretensions to merit—laziness and ignorance are the two most cherished characteristics of my class; whereas, to one lowly born like yourself, if you will pardon my saying so, knowledge is always a marketable commodity. Being extremely desirous to see you, my dear Harry, a perfect storehouse of learning, I now insist that *you* do take the gloves and witch the world with noble gripmanship."

Magnanimously as these words were spoken, they appealed only to the churlish side of Harry Sanford's nature. For reply, he thrust his left shoulder against the right of Tommy Merton, and, elevating himself on his left foot, menaced his schoolfellow with his right fist and growled,

"Cut all that out. Are you ready to begin?"

"Aye, aye," answered Tommy, with an effort.

"When I say 'Hands on the bird,' grab him by the wings and hang on like measles while I pull the quills. Now, then, 'Hands on the bird.'"

Instantly Master Merton grabbed Ara with his double-gloved fists, and simultaneously Master Sanford gripped the gorgeous tail and tugged vigorously. The air was rent by fearful shrieks, but all that Tommy Merton heard was the hissed order from his comrade,

"Release!"

Even as he released, tearing off the hedging-gloves and casting them over the fence on to the towing-

path below, the keeper reappeared; but Harry Sanford, with a double handful of the coveted feathers, had heard the man approaching in ample time to thrust both fists behind him.

The keeper could see that the bird was agitated, and that the boys had something on their minds. But he was no piscator—good, simple soul; and all that he said was,

"Aha! I told you so. I s'pose he's mighty near nipped yer fingers off!"

As I said at the beginning, Ara probably passed in his seed-tin as an equivalent for his checks years and years ago; but if only he could have seen those two youths' 'take' of salmon about three days later, he would have supported his martyrdom right cheerfully.

It was a cherished article of faith with my old comrade Shifter, that no matter what circumstances might arise to entangle a man from day to day, their parallel could be traced in one or other of the works of Charles Dickens; but I will go further back than that and assert that every human possibility is fully catalogued and set forth, with a simplicity of language and beauty of diction which has never been excelled, in a far older and more widely-circulated book than any that Dickens wrote, although, alas! its title is never found amongst those of "The Ten Best-Selling Books of the Month" in the publishers' circular. I will leave what follows to prove it.

As Saint Luke wrote to "most excellent Theophilus," a certain man had two sons, and the younger of them, called by his intimates Fat George, was for getting out into the gaslight whenever possible. His good father—worthy but mistaken soul!—having himself

torn a few millions out of manufactural trade, fell into the common error of trying to plant blossoms instead of seeds, which is opposed to all the laws of horticulture. The fact that there was plenty of everything to be had for nothing under the paternal roof in Princes Gate was not much of an inducement to an easy-going fat fellow to put in his days at the mighty works across the Thames at Battersea, where eight or nine hundred plain and honest toilers stood by the blast furnaces, slowly cooking, and watching for the hour at which the whistle blew. George most sensibly preferred getting about and indulging his natural talent for spending the money that was given to him. It was perhaps as well that sordid, degrading Trade had never claimed him for its own, for he could only have come a fearful purler at it. So George, pensioned off nominally at a hundred a month, migrated from the home nest to one of the better hotels round Covent Garden, his name disappearing simultaneously from the list of eligible young men which every mother of daughters in South Kensington kept in the 'secret' drawer of some impossibly small and unhandy writing-desk, whose ink-well was ever guiltless of writing fluid, and whose pen-tray contained only a pearl-handled button-hook. Nevertheless, Fat George remained supremely happy. Like most mountains of flesh, he was unselfish and good-natured to a fault, and consequently hopelessly wrong-headed about horse-racing. It will, by-the-bye, ever remain a vivid memory of my first meeting with him—as a fellow-subscriber to a coach party to old Croydon races on one bleak February afternoon—that after seven muddy and abortive pilgrimages from where we were pulled up by the winning-post

across to Tattersall's Ring to have it down on a 'moral,' which each time turned out wrong, he growled as the last 'pinch' came in second.

"Well, I'm blowed if I won't have *one* cert to-day!" and collaring two bottles of brandy and a jar of Scotch out of the boot, he quietly shut himself inside the coach and made the last thing he tried at a certainty indeed.

But George grew somewhat weary of it after fourteen or fifteen years, as many young blades do, and there were times when in his mind's eye he could see himself being welcomed at St Margaret's as the new communicant in the rats-in-the-garret colony. Coming home from Sandown Park on one of these grey days, somebody considerately assured him that he'd be real ripe *foie gras* to the worms whenever he went, and poor George reached Waterloo contemplating suicide. In that haven of so many historical meetings, the draughty old buffet on the Loop Line platform, George came across a certain middle-aged racing camp-follower whose surname being Budds and whose countenance being pickled by past libations to a deep shade of magenta, had been euphemistically called after a variety of June's fairest flowers, the 'Crimson Rambler.'

Now of all George's shoddy acquaintances (and with a rooted, but unvitiated, partiality for amusing, even if low company, George was on nodding terms with a great many wrong 'uns), he should in his present depressed state have flown from Budds as from a plague, since it was openly known to all but George that Budds had lately 'experienced religion,' whatever that may mean. It 'came to him' at the bedside of his dying wife, they said, with the conspicuous clarity

that characterises religious phenomena, reminding one of the converted billiard-marker who had a 'call' to go out into the highways and preach, but who, after being rotten-egged and dead-catted out of three bailiwicks, sat down by the roadside to consider the possibility of his having mistaken some other noise in the bar downstairs for the alleged 'call.' But George was beautifully oblivious of all this, wherefore he swung blindly in.

"Hullo, my Rambler!" cried he, slapping on the back the fellow who had received salvation along with a salmon-coloured Post Office Savings book that recorded the result of many years of feminine self-sacrifice, "and the first one to reach the bar, too! My word! you still want some catching at getting out of slips!"

"I—er—I came in from the street, not from the Sandown train, George," responded Budds, gravely, quite failing to understand how it could be that the news of his conversion had not become universal knowledge—the newly-religious mind, it should be understood, is rarely logical—but adding, as he suddenly brightened up on reflecting that, in the event of his falling from the new-found grace, there would be less to explain, "Had a good day?"

"Oh no, a regular snorter! Gimme two of your best cigars, missie," returned George, with characteristic fortitude. "They took everything I'd got barring this solitary half-sovereign; they wouldn't even have drawn the line at rags, bones, or bottles! Have any soda in yours?"

"No; plain, please."

"Right. That'll be one Scotch plain and one with soda, missie. No, Budds, I haven't touched a winner

for three weeks ; simply been giving my money away to bookies. I've been seriously thinking whether it wouldn't be simpler for me to go and chuck it in at the door of the Victoria Club to 'em every Monday morning, and so save myself the trouble of going down to the meetings. Now what would *you* do, Rambler?"

"Oh, what *I* should do is entirely different, George," answered Budds, plausibly. "If I had a run o' bad luck I should have to stand down, but *your* sire never got a jibber, I'll swear!"

"Kindly leave my father out of the question, Budds," said George, quietly but firmly ; "but for his great good heart, I should have seen my finish years ago."

"Exactly, an' all the more cause why I should refer to the good old gentleman now," chipped in Budds, discerning the weak spot and taking instant advantage of it. And, after all, religion itself is a matter, not of reason, but of feeling ; not of the head, but of the heart. "Your worthy parent" (here Budds raised his billycock reverently) "isn't going to ruck on you in the golden autumn of his life, just because you were denied the keen commercial instincts that led him to make a pile! Starting out from college, where, mark you, your good father" (off came the hat again) "set you, you faced the world only as a great big edjercated baby, at an age at which your father had his trade well in his hands. What's the lodgercal result? Never havin' had to go to work, you never acquired a proper knowledge of the value o' money, so you begins to drift like from the very start. Like the younger son of the man we're told of in the Gospel accordin' to St. Luke's—I was born, by the

way, just off the Old Street in the City Road ; rather a coincidence, ain't it?—whenever you finds yourself a bit short of cash, you've only got to go to your father an' say, 'Father, let's have a bit of what's comin' to me, will ye?' and naturally he writes ye out a cheque. An' when you've cashed the cheque an' blown it in, remorse supervenes, an', like your scriptural predecessor, you asks yourself how many servants o' yer father's has enough an' to spare while you perishes with hunger? Depend upon it, George, I've been placed under yer nose to-day by Providence to point ye out the way ; wherefore I now says to you 'George, you—*you* are the Prodigal Son. Arise an' go to yer people!'"

In the mute acquiescence of the moment, George picked up his glass and finished his whisky.

"But supposing——" he demurred, mildly.

"Suppose nothing!" interposed Budds firmly. "If the New Testament be not enough to move ye, take the older ordinance, 'On to yer father and yer mother, that yer days may belong to the land'—meanin' racin' an' foxhuntin' an' so on. An' *that's* one o' the Ten Commandments! So now, George, up yer goes to Princes Gate without any further objections or qualms of conscience. Go on—go!"

Deeply impressed by these sound arguments, and taking the purely sporting view that there was very little weight anyhow between the biblical young gentleman who filled his belly with what the pigs took exception to and himself, George resolved to fall upon his father's neck that very night : he would turn up at Princes Gate in time for dinner, and frankly make the best of it. As he strolled down the incline from the railway station and crossed over the

York Road to the mean little street which leads to Hungerford Bridge, George argued sedulously within himself—Of what use are parables if they don't stand the test of practice? Besides, who could say but that his anguished father had not long awaited his home-coming? If the son did not voluntarily return, how could the father act his part? No father could possibly eat, drink, and be merry on account of a prodigal son who hadn't yet come in from husking.

George's mind was fully made up; but he sorely needed a supporter, a sort of 'best man,' to whom he could turn in the event of his courage giving out. Budds, the Rambler, was available, but was hardly 'class' enough for Princes Gate. Though Budds' diagnosis was acceptable, his further attendance on the case might well be dispensed with, since his manners needed polishing, his brains broadening, and his conversation sweetening.

In the bar at Epitaux's in the Haymarket, where George's truant feet intuitively took him, he came across the very fellow he needed—one Horace Hayes, an old Oxford man. Horace had been a scholar of Balliol, and had read many essays to the cherubic Jowler, and made many more appearances in the Vice-Chancellor's Court before he had been sent down. What he did *now*, besides back horses and hang about bars, none knew; none sought to know. He was particularly popular in the set in which he chose to be an ornament; and as he could take his own part equally well in a contest of intellects or a combat of fists, nobody openly inquired into his affairs. He was, in short, a big, good-looking, fearless chap, of just the sort that one could picture doing big things in those mediæval days of

which the historian says ". . . . the most numerous class in England at this time were the unbridled libertines and gentlemanly heavy-weight villains," quite overlooking the fact that it was thenadays as much as a man's life was worth to be anything else. Consequently Horace Hayes was precisely the man that George needed at the moment, and George dissipated no time in enlisting his services. And these being all the more readily granted since, behind his always paramount willingness to do a pal a turn, Hayes had a strange yearning to once again sit down at a family dinner-table with, as an additional inducement, the not remote possibility of a family 'scene,' the precious pair were soon getting into sable raiment, George at his hotel in Covent Garden, and Hayes in his attic at the eastern end of Jermyn Street.

It should not seriously stretch the imaginative powers of the reader to conceive how general was the consternation, when Fat George and his good-looking friend strode, unannounced by the powdered footman, into the crowded reception-room of the mansion in Princes Gate, and promptly proceeded to blend themselves with the well-groomed company. The effect was instantaneous and electrical, for everyone in the room had heard all about the family 'bad egg,' and, with that compassionate consideration for the feelings of others which marks the distinction between a gathering of well-dressed people and a box of new monkeys at Jamrach's, everybody turned instantly on recognising the son to note the effect produced upon the father. Poor old father! Unable to get within whispering distance of the scapegrace, and fearful only of what might be going to happen next, he roamed up and down, outside the impassable

line of human blockhouses, executing the minor convulsion of nature known as a pained smile. Nor did the announcement that dinner was served relieve the tension to any appreciable extent. Fat George had by this time become 'the cynosure of every eye,' as the racing reporter never fails to say of the favourite on Derby Day, and his nervousness was increasing at an even greater rate than his notoriety.

"Horace," he whispered, tightening his grip on his chum's arm and heading for the stairs, "you will stick close to me?"

"Aye, closer than a sick kitten to a hot brick," replied Horace, reassuringly.

"Two chairs as near the middle of the table as we can get 'em," George continued; "never mind protests, or whose chairs they may be. And we two as quiet and inseparable as a brace of jellyfish?"

"My idea exactly," responded Hayes.

There was one short but critical instant as the remorseless twain entered the dining-room when they came within an ace of being alone with the host and hostess and the servants, but interested guests turned up in time to avert a premature denouement. And yet George's courage wouldn't keep at the sticking-place.

"Horace," he bleated, nudging the arm of his companion, who, with his head turned, was staring at a remarkably pretty girl engaged in wolfing prawns at the other end of the table, "Horace, I feel somehow——"

"The devil you do!" exclaimed Hayes, jumping at conclusions. "Hanged if I didn't *fancy* you were getting spiffed when we had that last one at the Swan in Sloane Street! Then I s'pose I've got to face the music alone?"

"No, no, no; not *that*," George remonstrated, not daring to resent the accusation, "but everything here reminds me so of the happier days. These plates—these forks—my dear old dad at the head of the table——"

"Oh, *he* won't roust you," responded Hayes in the most comforting tones. "Cheer up; he's *bound* to come your way; for, apart from his consideration for his guests, blood's thicker than logic."

"Indeed I hope so. Yes, please, Hobson, I'll take some sherry; so will Mr Hayes."

Raising the glass which the footman had just filled, George downed his sherry at a gulp, but his maudlin melancholy mood remained. His soup went away untasted, and in its place came a wedge of turbot. George 'passed' the fish, but took the accompanying glass of Chablis—a grand old Chablis, of great age and softness.

"For goodness' sake *eat* something, George," Hayes whispered, foreseeing in all this liquidity the approaching mellowness of his friend; and poor George replied,

"That's all right, old man. We shall get a glass of Boy with the entrée, and I can do with it, too."

But, for some inscrutable reason, the wine did not put in an appearance with the *rissolettes aux truffes*, and as Horace, when appealed to, could not decide precisely what the brown and mysterious morsels were composed of, George let that course go by also.

"Now, look here, George," observed Hayes with great severity as the plates were taken away, "this tomfoolery of yours has got to stop. Your dear old father has been gazing at you in the most wistful way for the last fifteen minutes, while your delightful old mater, who is hidden from you by this floral decoration

on my right, is rapidly approaching a state of collapse. You've got to take the next course if it chokes you, George; mark me, I say if it chokes you!"

Thus threatened, and with an even greater fear of offending the friend who was standing by him in the hour of his domestic ordeal than of asphyxiation itself, George grabbed up his knife and fork with alacrity as soon as a helping of the next course was set before him, and, to further re-establish confidence, he instantly, and rather loudly, asked for the mustard. On the hot plate which was now in front of him nestled a spatula of unhealthy-looking white meat, partly covered by a jet of bilious, golden-brown gravy. Many a careless-feeding man might have mistaken it for a wedge of pork, but as George's gaze rested upon it, his hands began to tremble and his eyes to fill with tears. His breathing became laboured and stertorous, and with every passing second his agitation increased. Hayes glared at him in a mixed state of anger and amazement, uncertain whether these were the symptoms of mere drunkenness or of some far more serious ailment, but even before he could put forth a restraining hand, the truth was demonstrated. Grasping his plate with temporarily palsied fingers and crooning and blubbering by turns, fat George staggered to his feet. Then turning towards the head of the table and holding his portion of the current 'course' at arm's length for all to see, he bellowed:

"Veal! My God, *veal*, and—*fat* veal! O father, father! This is the fifteenth chapter of Luke to the very ounce! Bless you—bless you——" But here, just where he should have fallen on his father's neck and kissed him, his emotion overcame his physical

self-control and he pitched forward with a crash upon the table, fat veal and all!

When George regained consciousness he was closeted in a small writing-room with his father and Hayes, and his father, redly enraged, was writing out a cheque.

"For your outrageous conduct to-night," declared the old man, literally shaking with bitterness and fury, "I absolutely despise you; but for the sake of the mother that bore you, and in order to get you out of my sight, I give you this money. Now go, and your companion with you!"

That white meat alone had done it. But for the untimely appearance of that slice of fat veal, Horace assured me at Kempton Park only the other day, there is no telling what the old gentleman would not have done for George—taken him back entirely and given him a private office with an American desk in it at the works, and called him his 'assistant something,' probably.

As a matter of fact it is better to bear proudly and philosophically the results of one's errors than to attempt to regain a lost position by grovelling, and there is more wisdom in the man who treats Conscience as a friendly tactician than in he who regards his moral sense of right and wrong only as a standard of rectitude.

For instance——, or for another instance.

No older acquaintance on a racecourse have I than Dr Gregory Riddle, of Bloomsbury, whom you yourself may know by quite another name. The doctor, having an income that more than satisfies his needs, has long ceased to look after his practice, whilst his local reputation is so strongly that of the racing man

and so feebly that of the great physician that he is seldom sent for save in the most urgent cases—say when a resident of the same street mistakes a black coalscuttle for a mad retriever and attempts to shoot it with the fire-tongs. He always gives the same prescription — a three-ounce bottle of magenta mixture; he invariably orders the same diet—a cup of barley-water and a small thermometer every two hours. In most boarding-houses of over a year's standing, his diagnosis is as familiar as a household oath.

But, once out of his legitimate sphere, what a different chap is he! In the big boxing club his opinions on the merits or demerits of the fighters are invariably as correctly based as they are openly expressed; in the hot members' enclosure at the race-meeting he is either advising the owner of the favourite how to run his horse or else regaling a group of bookmakers with the latest story. And at night, in the private card-room of the Newmarket hotel, his thundering shout when he makes an 'abundance' at Solo, almost causes the fat grey stallions in Rosa Bonheur's engraving, hanging on the wall, to throw up their heads and start pulling their half-clad attendants clean out of the show-ring.

Driving back to town from Hurst Park after the racing on a Whitsun Monday, the doctor reined up for a parting glass at the excellent Eyot Hotel—by which name as well as by any other I may, in this year of fresh crusades against licensed victuallers, mask a most familiar hostelry. For, on licensed premises, sweepstakes on horse-races are grossly unlawful; yet, almost before the genial doctor had had time to wet both eyes, one of the prettiest barmaids

that ever pulled on a beer-engine wished to know whether he was going to take a one-pound ticket in her Derby Draw. The list was already nearly full, but the proprietor intended to admit about eight or nine more subscribers, which would enable him to disburse one hundred and fifty pounds to the drawer of the Derby winner, seventy sovereigns to the holder of the second, and thirty to the third, an equitable apportionment which had only been arrived at after much debate between all the principal 'heads' in Molesey. As the playful old doctor, who was none too sober, unloaded a little highly-spiced chaff on the barmaid while pulling out his sovereign-case and finding a golden disc, a third character came upon the scene in the person of a certain Walter Sleath. Now Walter was a very warm proposition in life's great game, and much resembled what the Chicago campaign orator designated a 'Captain of Industry.' But as he had known the doctor for as long as that easy-going person had followed racing, he was instantly hailed by his front name and invited to take a share in the sweepstake, too. Racing men—even those who do not race entirely from disinterested motives—rarely follow Poor Richard's excellent rule of counting two-thousand before pulling out a sovereign, and Walter Sleath readily flung down his money and subscribed his name to the big ruled card in space 243, immediately below the name of Dr Riddle. None of the many things that subsequently happened on that Monday night in any sense concern this narrative, the action of which now passes to the Hill at Epsom on the Oaks Day.

Cap-and-Bells had just carried off the fillies' blue riband in a canter, simply smothering her twenty less-

fancied opponents, and the hill was alive with its accustomed din, dirt and vulgarity. On a spot which from the grand stand must have seemed black with vehicles, and where the plebeians and pickpockets from St Giles's swarmed round the wheels of the coaches from St James's, Dr Gregory Riddle stood by an open luncheon basket, drinking champagne out of a soda-water tumbler. The doctor was blandly, inattentively inebriated, though by no means depressed by the fact that he had had two-hundred-and-twenty to twenty about Santa Brigida, the second favourite who finished nowhere, and he might even have been cheerful if only one or other of the grooms could have found him aught to eat save superfluous Vienna rolls or stodgy bananas. As he was only taking hillside pot-luck with a most casual acquaintance, he could scarcely bully the servants into producing one of the cold chickens or glazed tongues which his knowledge of the world told him had been secreted in the back part of the boot for stable consumption; but he had just asked rather pointedly if there was nothing else left, when a cheery and familiar voice behind him cried:

"What, my doctor! And starving, too? Come along to *our* coach and *I'll* stake you to some pigeon pie, or a lobster or something!"

It was Walter Sleath, and never had Walter Sleath been more welcome than at that moment.

"Backed Santa Brigida, eh? My word, you were on a dud! Somebody sent you a Marconi from dreamland?" exclaimed Sleath, as he bore the doctor off through the gipsies and the gaping rustics to where, behind another coach, the companions of *his* coach stood drinking. "Here, boys, what have we

got left in the way of tucker? My friend Dr Riddle is famished!"

"Here's a beautiful j'int o' lamb, never had a knife in it, Mr Sleath," said the professional coachman, who was also the caterer, as he lifted a tempting cold shoulder out of the hamper. "Henery, get out that mint sauce what I put in the Johannis bottle; unless the doctor would pryfer a thumb-bit?"

But the doctor preferred an honest helping of the juicy cold sheepling, and the while he stood and ate it (most of his new-found friends having meanwhile clambered on to the coach-top at the clanging of the number-bell) Mr Sleath imparted some unlooked-for good-news.

"Gregory, my buck!" cried he, slapping the doctor on the back, "I owe you fifty pounds. I can't give it to you here and now because I haven't brought it with me, but to-morrow morning, and anywhere you like—always providing, of course, that we don't get our necks broken, going home—it's yours!"

So unfeignedly surprised was Dr Riddle that, inadvertently tilting his plate, he spilt about a gill of dark-brown mint sauce all down the front of his ashes-of-roses trousers without noticing it. He had not the faintest remembrance of any monetary transaction whatever with Walter Sleath; but at the mention of the owing fifty he counterfeited a facial expression that was full of light and life. And Sleath continued:

"Surely you've not forgotten the Derby Sweep at the Eyot? Don't you remember, lad, how we each took a chance in it, and, after several drinks, agreed that if either of us won it he should give the other a fifty-pun' note? Well, hanged if I haven't brought it

off, consequently I've got to give you fifty of the very best!"

All this was brand new to the doctor, but he solidly refrained from saying so. For one brief instant, truly, he and his conscience held an unequal struggle; then conscience had to fall. Gregory Riddle smothered his scruples by reflecting that it would cost Walter Sleath nothing, while it would more than put his own pocket right over Santa Brigida, a consoling form of argument perfectly compatible with the views of the talented historian who excused Judas Iscariot on the ground of habitual intemperance. With conscience silenced, it was only a question of arranging a settlement, and here the doctor's fine commercial instincts shone like the light at Gris Nez. Leading the way into the marquee of a sporting club of which he was a member, Dr Riddle called for a bottle of wine, and, all aglow with joy, asked his companion:

"I suppose you haven't drawn your winnings yet, Walter?"

"No," answered Walter, "to-morrow will be time enough: where shall I be likely to find you in the afternoon?"

"I generally go to the Oxford on a Saturday afternoon," replied Riddle. "Suppose we call it the Oxford, and I'll book a box. But look here, I don't want to seem mercenary, but you made the remark just now that there was a remote possibility of your getting your neck broken on the drive home; why not give me a bit of writing of some sort?"

"Ah, *that's* where you show your sound commonsense, Gregory!" cried Sleath, in tones of undisguised admiration. "That's precisely what we should have done on Whitsun Monday: that's what I shall always

do in the future. An understanding that is not worth jointly noting is not worth remembering."

"Quite so," assented the doctor, with as much warmth as a man might decently use when the bargain was all on his side. Then, in order to take the edge off his seeming avidity, he added, "Why not, just for form's sake, exchange such memorandums of agreement now?"

"Just as you like," said Sleath, with good-humoured indifference. "It certainly would appear more equitable to the eyes of my executors if your covenant was found amongst my papers."

Therefore a pen and a bottle of ink were borrowed of a kitchen clerk, and Sleath, taking one of his visiting-cards from his pocket-book, inscribed it to the landlord of the Eyot Hotel. As soon as the inscription was dry he reversed the card and wrote: "Eyot Hotel, Whit Monday, May 27, '01. Dear Sir,—In the event of my drawing the winning horse in your Derby Sweepstake, in which I have just taken a ticket, be good enough to pay to my friend Dr Gregory Riddle on demand the sum of fifty pounds, and deduct the same from my prize-money.—WALTER G. SLEATH."

Next the doctor took the pen, and, following the phraseology of his friend, addressed one of his own cards to the proprietor of the Eyot, requesting him, in the event of *his* winning the Sweep, to hand over to "my friend, Mr Walter G. Sleath," just half a hundred pounds.

"And now," said Mr Sleath as he tucked away the doctor's card inside his cigarette case, "just one more bottle as a Doc and Doris, for the bringing off of a fifty-to-none shot demands some sort of a headache in the morning!"

How true, alas!

Dr Gregory Riddle got to the Oxford very early on the afternoon of Saturday, June the eighth, but, though he purchased a private box, he could not sit in it. As he remarked to an acquaintance whom he met in the bar: "I didn't notice myself getting it at Epsom yesterday, but I've had nineteen gins-and-milks and I'm blest if I feel right *yet*!" But it really was anxiety that affected him. As the afternoon wore on and the milk supply gave out, the doctor became reckless. He went from bar to bar drinking 'rattlesnake cocktails,' which, as all the world knows, are the only things that will assimilate with gin-and-milk. He had to close his left eye in order to be able to see at all, and, even at that, all the barmaids and the bottles seemed to be interminably looping the loop. Finally he was turned out.

The morning glory of a sunny Sunday in the month of June is thrown away upon the man who, with a heroic determination to try and eat some breakfast, has only contrived to put down a brandy sour, so it was avarice—avarice tempered by a certain strange uneasiness—that prompted Gregory Riddle to send to the livery stables in Guildford Street to hire a landau to take him to Molesey. His night's rest had done him harm rather than good. Sleep, someone, whose name and ranchmarks I have forgotten, once observed, is much overrated. Man goes to bed as happy as a grig, but awakes with feelings of the deepest sadness. All night he is kindly disposed towards everybody; in the morning he remembers how he hugged the night policeman, and he shudders, for now he simply loathes the fellow. Thus he is wise who, eschewing the delusive Morpheus, sits up all night.

Every hotel bar around Hampton Court was swarming with thirsty humanity on that lustrous Sunday morning; but the enterprising proprietor of the Eyot instantly came from behind his bar to welcome Dr Riddle, who was a steady customer through all seasons.

"Seen Mr Sleath lately?" the doctor asked, unable to dissemble his increasing anxiety.

"Oh yes!" laughed the landlord with a significant chuckle. "He looked in on Friday night on his way back from Epsom. Lucky devil! I gave him his fifty. But there! you always were a generous winner, doctor."

"A w–w–what?" stammered Riddle.

"A big-hearted winner, sir. As my daughter Tillie said, she'd bet a shilling that, out of the hundred-an'-fifty which our sweep was worth, you'd go and give away nearer a hundred than anything else!"

"B–b–but, I thought—*surely* Mr Sleath won the sweepstakes?" gasped the fluttered physician.

"No fear!" shouted the victualler; with boisterous merriment. "Who are you trying to get at, doctor; you—*you* drew Volodyovski: Sleath only pulled out a blank!"

One more question only did Gregory Riddle ask:

"And when did Mr Sleath know that this was so?"

"Oh, over a week ago: dammit, he was here while the sweep was being drawn!"

CHAPTER V.

Some memories of Cecil Street—As a 'matchless situation'—The easy-going Dickie Dalzell—Harbours the Captain and the milliner—And the bibulous old school-fellow—Also the baronet—And Lady Roland—The storm passes—Of Kangaroo Hill—The Duke of Portland—Of Darmstatter—And a Government Lottery—Of honesty in the game of billiards—An adventure at Sandown Park—In which Billie Harris—Emerges from a barney—King's Road, Brighton, on a race night—Losing a gold Frodsham—And re-gaining it—'Haymakers'—A brother's reckoning—In a Drury Lane dressing-room—Herbert Campbell buys a comic song—The domestic troubles of Mr Pipewick—Told in his own letters—And his taking-off.

In the sad process of reconstructing that part of the southern side of the Strand which lies between Savoy Hill and Adam Street, there has been obliterated and lost to humanity for ever a certain delightful thoroughfare that literally reeked with precious memories. It lived and died in shape a narrow-necked *cul-de-sac*, its ground plan taking the form of a huge anchovy sauce bottle lying belly downwards, and it was called Cecil Street. Its site is now occupied by the eastern wing of the Hotel Cecil, which fact alone enunciates the excellent judgment and sound sense of the good fellows—now, alas! mostly beneath earth's crust—who made it their stamping ground some twenty years ago. For position

is, after all, the main point to the sane masculine mind. "The best rooms I ever had were in Jermyn Street," once observed Major Bob Hope-Johnstone to a callow youth who complained of the dearth of good rooms in town. "And what were the points about them?" asked the boy. "Points?" roared the Major, indignantly. "Points? Why, their matchless situation! When I wasn't in the Criterion I was in bed, and when I wasn't in bed I was in the Criterion. I should like to know what more 'points' you want!"

Most of the houses in Cecil Street were let as lodgings and were of varying grades of respectability, declining slightly towards the Thames end. Up by the 'neck of the bottle,' however, the landladies were more particular, and one or two tenements even ran to solicitors' offices on the ground floor. It is of one of these houses that I have first to speak. Its first-pair suite, consisting of a sitting-room, a bedroom, and a small kitchen, all faultlessly furnished, was occupied by the very easiest-going gentleman in London. Since he still, happily, lives and strongly deprecates idle curiosity or impertinent guesses as to his identity, I must call him Dickie Dalzell. His one great weakness lay in his utter inability to say "No" to a friend, the natural result of which was that he was constantly in hot water or else emerging from it, lobster like, done to a degree. It may even be quite beyond his own power (as it certainly would be opposed to his inclination) to enumerate one tenth of what he has suffered and gone through on behalf of people with whom he has, in many cases, been only slightly acquainted. So admirable a man belittled the much-envied eulogium about loving 'his neighbour as himself,' more particularly since Dickie Dalzell

had but few vices, whilst the man on his right in Cecil Street kept a faro-hell and the one on his left subsequently did 'time' for running a house of ill-fame.

Into the smokehole at Simpson's came Dickie one night, looking about as happy as a carp in a tub of bran.

"I am practically turned out of my own rooms tonight," he said, sipping the excellent hot grog which my friend Sam Pallant had instantly prescribed, "but I daresay I will be able to get a bed at the Golden Cross. How does it happen? Why, to begin with, an awfully decent chap whom I met at Hurlingham, a Captain Knowlton, has come up unexpectedly from Polegate. You may know him: he is some sort of a company-promoter and lives at Polegate, though he also keeps a bedroom at his club. No? Oh, well, he's a very nice chap, I assure you. He has the misfortune to be married, though; and that's how it comes about that he is lying doggoh in my bedroom at this moment. Instead of returning to Polegate yesterday as he should have done, he preferred to take one of his favourite *pièces de patisserie*—a Court milliner, I think she is, up in Mayfair—out to dinner, and it seems that his anguished wife, who had all along suspected something of the kind, spotted the pair of them as they emerged from the Café Royal. As my bad luck would have it, they hopped into a hansom and came, as hard as the horse could gallop, to the Strand, hotly pursued, in another and a better hansom, by the injured lawful consort. The poor lady overshot them as they tore into the Strand, a blunder which they took instant advantage of by paying off their cabman and doubling across the road, but not before madame's cabby had twigged the trick.

This idiot raised a regular hue-and-cry, and by standing up on his dickey, managed to keep the flying pair in sight until they fled round my corner like hares, and—got to ground! Of course they're safe enough where they are, but madame, who only lost them as they rounded the turn for home, is pacing the top of Cecil Street like a bear robbed of her cubs, and will probably mount guard there till she starves the quarry out!"

"Looks like the sitting-room sofa for Dickie," I said.

"Nay, even that is debarred me; at least for to-night," he replied, bringing out the last words as though heartily ashamed of his own impuissance. "An old schoolfellow of mine, Billie Wyndham, has turned up, as tight as twenty lords! He is in distinctly serious trouble, and has apparently been trying to drink himself into a trance. Though he is well enough able to walk, he cannot keep his eyes open, and he persists in mistaking me for his wronged spouse. Keeps on calling me 'Flo, *dear* Flo,' and going down on his knees and promising that he '*will* faithfully give her up' if only he is given '*one* more chance, just *one* more!' It's positively distracting: I shall have to give up my rooms if it goes on. Meanwhile, here I am without a bed to lie on!"

This was, however, but a trifling difficulty, and was soon got over. They found him a bedroom at the Charing Cross; but my principal anxiety was to follow this interesting farce to its finish, and it came on the morrow.

At somewhere about eleven o'clock next morning Wyndham awoke and realised where he was. Getting up and knocking at the bedroom door to apologise to

Dickie Dalzell for his outrageous conduct of the previous night, Wyndham aroused the captain. Confusion! — apologies — mutual explanations. Even whilst these were in progress Dickie himself returned, and brought the good news that there were no signs whatever of Mrs Knowlton at the top of the street.

"Bravo! and three times bravo!" cried the poor captain, much relieved. "Then if you two fellows are agreeable—nay, I shall insist upon it—we will adjourn in a body to Verrey's for breakfast, for, speaking personally and quite selfishly, a real good bottle of wine is just now a necessary-de-la-vie to me, as Mark Twain says!"

"If you don't mind," interposed Dickie, timorously, "letting me have my bedroom for about ten minutes, just to change my clothes in?"

So Captain Knowlton and the little milliner stepped out into the sitting-room to discuss vapid generalities while the host apologised for temporarily closing his own bedroom door.

Perhaps ten—certainly not more than twelve—minutes had elapsed, when a sudden rushing of feet, first in the hall below and then upon the stairs, caused the three guilty souls in that sitting-room to start up and fix their eyes, with one accord, upon the oaken door. Instinctively they felt that something was about to happen. Nearer drew the footsteps—nearer—nearer; then—crash! The door flew open and a hatless man rushed in. He was a fine, athletic chap, all boiling with excitement and nearly out of breath. Hastily scanning the room, and not finding what he sought, he bellowed:

"Speak up—quick! Where the devil is Dalzell?"

Three tongues obstinately adhered to three hard

palates and gave no answering sound, but three right hands were raised and three trembling forefingers pointed to the bedroom door behind which Dickie Dalzell, in the most blissful innocence, was understood to be changing his raiment. One tug from the hatless agitated Hercules brought the half-locked bedroom door wide open and discovered Dickie, faultlessly clad in a frock-coat suit of darkish grey material, busily withdrawing his loose change from the pockets of the clothes in which he had appeared on the previous night.

"Heav'n be praised that I have found you at home!" cried the big man, flinging himself upon Dalzell and lifting that unfortunate person bodily off his feet. "Into bed with you, clothes and all! My life itself depends upon it! So, so! Briefly, Dickie, I have been out all night and there's sheol to pay, but you must and can get me out of it. Now mind, you're supposed to have been run over by an omnibus last night—compound fracture of both thighs—and I've been sitting up with you. Egad! I hear my wife coming up the stairs even now!"

By this time Dickie had been thrust into the rumpled bed and forcibly covered with the bedclothes. So sudden had his capture been that his right hand, which protruded meekly from the sheets, still grasped some gold and silver coins. His captor flopped down heavily upon the bedside and promptly assumed a look of solicitude that was far more intense than reasonable, and contrasted strongly with the expression of surprise and suffering which the victim wore.

There strode into the outer room at this moment an imperious matron literally bristling at the prospect of a 'scene.' She was the sort of woman whose

vanity was flattered and whose jealous spite was gratified at finding herself in the brutal position of being able to demand the instant dismissal of a mistress, and so great a hurry was she in to play her *rôle* that only a very small amount of judicious duplicity was sufficient to entangle her intellect. The two fully-dressed men and the girl with her hat and gloves on, who were so obviously anxious callers waiting in the sitting-room, supplied the 'dope' and completely turned the trick. In five short seconds the lady's bearing underwent a consummate metamorphosis.

"Is—er—anyone with Mr Dalzell besides Sir Roland?" she asked, impersonally, of the guilty trinity; and the shrewd Knowlton, who had overheard the hasty menace with which the host was crowded into bed, answered quietly:

"No, madame, but we are momentarily expecting the doctor."

Lady Roland stepped through the open door into the bedroom just as Dalzell, to escape fresh and unknown developments, closed his eyes. The penitent woman stooped down to pick up from the carpet and place upon the dressing-table, two sovereigns, a florin, a sixpence and a threepenny-bit—apparently Dalzell had been run over on Tom Tiddler's ground—and, approaching her husband, said:

"Roland, I ask your pardon. Let us return to breakfast and you can call and inquire as to Mr Dalzell's condition later in the day, after the doctors have seen him."

How gracefully, and yet how naturally, did Roland yield! It is among weak men that you find obstinacy, not among the strong; although Sir Roland's com-

pliance had all the merits and defects that come with this form of marital submission, for, with a bow, he answered:

"Blanche, you have my full forgiveness and I will return with you. But not before I have pledged my word to my poor friend here to sit and watch by him through the long hours of to-morrow night!"

If any moral is to be deduced from this veracious incident (which I deem it expedient to thus discreetly terminate), it surely is that wedlock, played slow, is a far more interesting and scientific game than politics, or even Bridge; but I bid you cross the roadway with me to the door of No. 14.

Here, in the days of which I have been writing, lodged Arthur William Hill, facetiously styled 'Kangaroo,' in playful allusion to his trouserial rotundity and his temporary sojourn in New South Wales; and a skilled and gentlemanly exponent of turf literature was he, though unconventional to a fault and having as little veneration for ancient lineage as a chicken born in an incubator. He was at school, for instance, with young William John Arthur Charles James Cavendish-Bentinck, and after being out of England for many years, recognised his friend in a portly gentleman who was pounding across Newmarket Heath on a coal-black cob. "Hi! Bentinck, hi! Pull up, dash you!" he shouted as the horseman swept by, whilst some brother scribblers, suitably shocked, or affecting to be, told him who it was. "What, is *he* the Duke of Portland?" cried Kangaroo, with new hope. "Why, the last time we were out together I lent the beggar five bob!" which was the schoolboy fact. At one time and another Hill contributed "Vigilant's Note Book" to

The Sportsman, the leading article to *The Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, and for a time he edited *The Manchester Sporting Telegraph*. Since I was at that time rather more seriously engaged in reporting events of the racecourse than I ever yearn to be again, we had many tastes in common, and one of these was for chopping and steaking at the Teutonic grill-room in the Strand, which, under the rule of Mr James Darmstatter, was a house-of-call for racing men, a rendezvous of litterateurs, a home-from-home for the sons of the Fatherland, a perfect little Klondyke to cadgers, and a sort of registry office for actors out-of-collar.

In this hospitable drum we were ensconced one night discussing the racing of the coming week. It is easy to talk of Epsom for a considerable time, and Hill and I may have jabbered away for an hour or more without noticing that a small intelligent Teuton, with eyes as brightly blue as Mrs Langtry's and a wealth of ginger hair, a little alien who from time to time buried his features in a glass tankard with a metal lid and came up dripping like a dog that has zealously forded a river to fetch back a sixpenny walking-stick, was listening intently to all that was said. The crowning point came when Hill casually mentioned the word 'sweepstakes,' whereupon the little man first begged pardon for interrupting us, then apologised for overhearing what he thought we were talking about, and wound up by inquiring if we were in any way connected with the "State Lottery for the Derby Race"?

This was far too rich to be missed, so, taking the initiative in something like a hurry, I informed the little chap that his power of discernment was truly

marvellous: that we were indeed the two authorised agents of the great House of Commons Sweepstake, drawn for annually on the eve of the great race at Epsom. "But, there," I concluded (utterly failing to call to mind what was the German equivalent for 'Get out!') as I gave him a dig in the ribs, "somebody or other has pointed us out to you!" Here Hill sensibly took up the running with a graphic description of the committee room, with Mr John Morley and Mr Chamberlain writing out the tickets and Mr Balfour shaking them up in Sir William Harcourt's silk hat. His humorous account of how Lord Rosebery once pulled the lining itself out of Sir William's beaver gave rise to much laughter. "Poor dear old Sir William!" laughed Hill, the tears streaming down his fat cheeks.

Then the German asked how much apiece were the tickets, and was told one guinea. He proceeded to pull out a fat, grandmotherly purse encircled by an elastic band; but before opening it, he explained in more or less convalescent English that he was the very soul and embodiment of superstition in all matters where chance was concerned, having been made so by the fact that he once upon a time drew the big prize in the Great Imperial Lottery of Seidlitz-powderburg, or something like it, on a ticket numbered seven-hundred-and-seventy-seven. If he could purchase a similarly numbered ticket in *our* lottery he was there with the guinea, but not otherwise.

Hill pulled out of his pocket the familiar blood-red penny memorandum book ruled with cash-lines in which his landlady made weird entries for milk and coals and whisky—but mainly whisky—and, rapidly turning over several leaves with his moistened

fingers, announced that ticket No. *777* had *not* yet been sold. The little German was highly delighted. Not only did he plank down his guinea on the counter along with his name and address, neatly written on a page torn from his metallic note-book, but he insisted on us joining him, "shoost vor luck, eh?" in three funnel-shaped glasses of some beastly Bavarian joy-producer which they kept in a green bottle on the top shelf behind the special sausages which, aided by the heat of the gas, were acquiring their second flavour. Escaping at length with our lives, we adjourned to Romano's to buy a bottle of wine and a couple of weeds with the guinea.

It may have been close upon an hour later that, as the weeds burned low and the late lamented Otto presented the bill, Kangaroo turned on me and remarked with censorious severity:

"Pitcher, I think that this joke has gone far enough."

"The guinea itself will go no further, will it?" I inquired.

"No," said he, "eighteenpence to Otto balances the deal. But what I mean is that we've had a good laugh out of the little fool of a German who thought that the British Government sent lottery touts out into the bars of the Strand, and now it's time to end it."

"In what way?"

"We must go and give him back his guinea," answered Hill, "and explain that the whole affair was only a joke."

This did, I must admit, seem to me to be a wofully feeble ending to the deal, and one that, so far as I was concerned, wanted an immensity of thinking over. Whether the little Teuton with the blue eyes and the

inflamed hair chose to regard it as a mad wild jest or looked upon it as the most dismal thing that had come under his observation since the historic failure of the sauerkraut crop, was of far less moment to me than the humiliating prospect of re-entering Darmstatter's with my tail between my legs and tamely explaining to an unfriendly alien that I had been monkeying with his money. The risk of being arrested as a felon was for once more acceptable than the prospect of posing as an abject fool. Meanwhile Hill was becoming mighty impatient. Already he had hauled the sum of ten and sixpence out of his pocket and laid it on the marble table for me to cover with a similar sum, but, as I made no sign of staking, he took it in his palm again, and, with some petulant remark about the folly of practical joking where money was concerned, got up and walked out of Romano's, and back into Darmstatter's, I following.

Darmy's was still packed when we re-entered it; indeed, the place seemed hotter and smokier than ever. The grill-cook had done for the night, and the waiters were reversing the chairs and putting them on the tables. But our little Teuton, who, on the strength of having once set all Seidlitzpowderburg talking with his thaler ticket, had joined our mythic sweep, had gone. As Hill heard the news from Hermann, the waiter, his countenance fell. A contingency had arisen for which he was not prepared. He turned on me abruptly and said he should make a clean breast of the whole affair to Darmy and leave him to square it with his fellow countryman as best he might. Still I said nothing.

"Darmy," Hill began, turning round and catching the merry little *patron* by the lappel of his coat·

"Binstead and I have something to say to you. Come here."

Darmy only blinked at us through the smoke of his cigar, and allowed himself to be led a little way aside. Then Hill unwound his very yellow narrative. He enlarged upon the opening fact that our subscriber from the Fatherland (with whom, by the way, Darmstatter was very well acquainted) really brought the thing upon himself by pitchforking himself into our conversation at the mention of the word 'sweepstake.' From one point to another he went, until he told how, we never dreaming that such a thing would ever happen, the little German pulled out his purse and insisted on buying ticket No. *777*!

"Ach, and so he puyed der dicket, did he?" cried Darmy, much interested.

"He did."

"So! Now you know what *I* do?"

"No."

Like a flash he dived his right hand into his trousers pocket, and pulled out a sovereign and a shilling.

"Den I dell you: I dakes nomber sefen-unnert-und-sefendy-*eight*, see!" cried he. "Dot udder feller's de luggiest feller in Chermany, bot perhaps he might choost miss it py one, see?"

Hill, who had turned as blue as indigo, glanced at me nervously, but my superior size, my grim glare of determination, and a wink full of deep meaning, settled it. Darmstatter had No. *778*!

To admit that I had some difficulty in burking poor Kangaroo's confession will act as a salve to my soul. His love of a barney was, unlike my own, weaker than his strict observance of the laws of *meum et*

team; though, to be sure, he had one or two queer ideas where billiards were concerned.

"It's enough to sicken one of going straight, Pitcher," he remarked to me one night on my return to town after a week's strenuous coursing at Altcar. "Do you remember my telling you before you went away what a moral that billiard-handicap at B——'s was for me?"

"I do," I said; then, warned by his lugubrious tone, I added, "but of course, to have made it a real cert, you ought to have squared the marker."

"I *did* square the marker!" he almost yelled, "and that's just it. I got into the semi-final right enough, but the night we played the semi-final they rang in a new marker and I got beat by over twenty points. No more honesty at billiards for me."

But, with the mention of barneys, I have strayed from the pleasant purlieu of Cecil Street and I cannot turn back. For the memory of a bygone barney carries me to Esher.

It fell upon a certain bright and glorious Saturday afternoon in quite a recent July when all that was brave and still left in town, and nearly all that was beautiful, were mixing on the lawn and bathing in the sunshine on the hillside racecourse at Sandown Park —a form of mixed bathing to which the most puritanical could scarcely take offence—that I took twenty pounds to five about a winner: Ichi Ban in the Royal Handicap. Though not a transaction of such magnitude as to cause one's brain to reel or one's hair to stop growing, it still was a step most distinctly in the right direction; so, having lingered a moment to touch up Mr William Forster's bolt of banknotes to the tune of a pony, I was about to turn in the direction

of the justly popular canteen, when whom should I behold at my elbow but that eccentric genius, Mr Billie Harris. Attired in a sort of Meat Market compromise for evening-dress, by which a black alpaca frock did duty for the regulation swallow-tails (a costume in which I verily believe he sleeps), the great little sausage-maker stood glaring thoughtfully at the sun, as though the great luminary were alone responsible for that morning's rise in the price of pork. Billie, in his sable suit and contemplative pose, cut so graceful and imposing a figure that, to my mind, he supplied an eloquent and indisputable answer to Lord Rosebery's old question, "Why should not a committee of the Royal Academy gather together in order to find some chaste and interesting national costume, in which the distinguished men of the nineteenth century might descend to posterity?"

It was to me intensely interesting to gaze upon this pensive, pork-fed philosopher, attired in careless but howling defiance of the strangely finical bipeds over the rails in the Members' Enclosure, the creatures who habitually changed their clothes at least four times each day, whilst he who held London's sausage trade in the palm of his hand stood there clad in the garb of night, blandly oblivious of all save the remote possibility of a weakening market in hog's flesh. Most willingly would I have passed along, leaving Billie Harris to his mental speculations, but that there came upon the scene just then two of God's irreclaimables, whose furacious fingers itched for plunder, and whose mutual gaze was fixed upon the large and lustrous diamond stud which scintillated like a captured star in a firmament of Smithfield shirt-front.

Now both these men were old offenders, and one had but one eye, yet so vigilant and observant was that solitary optic that its owner was the chosen 'spotter' of a most relentless band of racecourse pick-pockets. I had had previous experience of him in the town of Brighton, where, after the races one night, he and his mob rattled a friend of mine named Garrett against the iron shutters of the jeweller's at the corner of West Street, and deprived him of a fine old family turnip. Garrett had, however, the presence of mind to yell after the retreating thieves, as, on the appearance of some constables, they cut up the hill like L for leather, "A tenner for it back to-morrow, and I shall be in Tattersall's!" It was a sentimental sum to offer, but it brought the watch back, eventually. Eventually, I repeat, because certain formalities had to be gone through. Firstly, as Garrett and I stepped out of a fly at the Grand Stand gate on the following day, a perfect stranger came behind us and said hurriedly, "Bung that tenner to ——— ——— (mentioning the name of a well-known ready-money bookmaker, since deceased) and yer clock shall be with him directly after the first race," and instantly disappeared. Straight to the bookie — a perfectly honest man—we went and deposited the note, stating at the same time that the missing chronometer was a gold-cased half-hunter by Frodsham. But on returning, when the first winner had been paid over, the kind intermediary only shook his head.

"They want a fuller description," he said, with a stolidity that acquitted him of any perception of the humour of the situation.

But Garrett, anxious as he was to regain his property, laughed aloud. "'Pon my word, old man!"

cried he, "they couldn't be more specific or distinctive if they represented Scotland Yard itself."

"Specific my aunt!" snarled the bookie, somewhat nettled; "they're on'y takin' pains to meet you as you're ameetin' them—in a gentlemanly way. They're anxious that you should get the right clock, which ain't such an easy matter considerin' they've got *seven* Frodshams, an' all half-hunters."

Ten minutes later, in company with the bookie and across the course, Garrett was permitted to pick his Frodsham from six others nestling in a red cotton handkerchief.

But, back to my Sandown barney.

Even as I contemplated turning away from the gorgeous sausage-maker, I noticed that the one-lamped knight was directing the attention of his more fortunate accomplice to the glistening gem; wherefore I said, quietly and unostentatiously to Harris:

"Billie, my buck, take a good look at those two johnnies behind me, and then come into the bar and have a small spot by way of a corrective."

Which Billie in due order did; and as a pint of Pommery creamed out into two tumblers, I further observed:

"Bill, you are just now enjoying the distinction of being as keenly shadowed as ever an Irish Secretary was, and all on account of that solitaire in your shirt-front. As soon as you step out of this bar those two getabits who were gazing at you just now will get up a dud or barney fight right under your very nose, while the rest of their mob will stand around as though they hadn't seen a fight for so long that they've forgotten the smell of arnica. And when it is all over and the dust has cleared away, that rare

and priceless head-light of yours will be missing. Savvee?"

Billie nodded his head significantly; and inserting his right hand into his waistcoat with a suddenness that caused even the middle-aged sophisticated race-course barmaid to blush, and gripping the diamond firmly with his left, he quickly unscrewed the coveted stud into two pieces—the jewelled screw and the eighteen-caret shank. Then, with an alacrity that partly explained how fields were won in the early morn where they battled o'er the beeves, William whipped out from a breast-pocket of the alpaca frock a blue ticket for a concert to be given in aid of the widdy and children of a one-time police-constable, and through this bit of card he screwed the precious ornament. Once again did his right hand vanish, and this time into the shirt-front itself.

"There," said he, beaming, as he withdrew the paw again, and twisted his body with a queer and skittish wriggle, "I've dropped it down my singlet, and as that goes into my pants, and my pants go into my socks, I couldn't even get at it myself without taking my boots off in the train. Now let us have another little pint."

"Nay, later on," said I; "for there goes the bell for the numbers, and they tell me it's a pinch for the Eulalia filly. Don't go too far away."

He did not; and principally for the most excellent reason that he no sooner got outside the buffet door than the one-eyed man and his accomplice reappeared from opposite directions. Billie strolled obliquely forward into the sunshine, half turning as he went, which brought the conspirators, who always keenly realise the wisdom of keeping moving, clear across

my bows. When the precious pair got a full front view of their intended victim the first thing that struck them both was the absence of the gem they hankered after. There was no diamond there now—nothing but a crumple right across the shirt and a blurred fresco of finger-marks around the gaping buttonhole.

"Lordlummy, Harry," said the two-eyed man in a rather audible whisper, borne straight into my ears by the summer breeze which was blowing my way, "You done that a treat! Where is it?"

The one-eyed man grinned feebly for a second or so, then frowned and answered:

"Whadderyer mean? *I* ain't got it."

"*You* ain't got it?" repeated the big fellow, very gravely; "then *where* is it? Mark me, Harry, the last workman that tried to put the cross on me, I——"

The bully showed his teeth and drew his fist back, menacingly, but the one-eyed 'un only growled with stolid candour:

"All I know is, I ain't even *handled* it, so there!"

For an instant they glared at each other like fighting terriers in the 'pit' of some Shoreditch tavern frequented by 'the fancy'; then, with an oath, the big 'un sent his right fist buzzing at the spotter. But, with consistent vigilance, the one-eye saw it coming, and its owner did the cuckoo-in-the-clock trick—struck and then ducked. Almost before the aggressor regained his balance, the aggrieved got into action with a rattling hot blow, which the Yankees who from time to time do battle at the N.S.C. term a "corkscrew punch in the slats," but before he could follow up his advantage he lost it.

The big man, foully red-tongued, and judging his distance to the hundredth of an inch, handed out a regular haymaker—so called from the fact that the recipient of the blow, on subsequently regaining consciousness, invariably believes that he has been up in a hay-loft looking for eggs—and the pair went down together.

Then it was that the police saw the necessity for closing in, and—well, a surging mob of a hundred or so is a thing I usually steer clear of. As the constables bore the battered, bleeding combatants through the turnstiles and away to the back of the buildings, where the temporary lock-up and the jockey's ambulance-room nestle together, Billie came back to me, and, running his fingers nimbly over his pockets and his brace-buttons, observed, ingenuously:

"I'm happy to say that I don't think I've lost anything, but—well, for a mere barney, they did *go* a bit, didn't they?"

There are, however, many other barneys than those which terminate in handing one's fellow atoms 'haymakers'; and one that was prettily conceived and artistically embroidered was that which was once expertly unloaded on my good friend Herbert Campbell. No matter just how long ago it was; let us speak of events *as* events, not as milestones—much as a certain good Pelican of fifteen years ago replied to a fellow bird who had enquired what was the difference in age between his brother and himself. "Why, blest if I can tell you," quoth he, "but you can judge pretty well for yourself: when he was born I was just old enough to cuddle his nurse!"

Pantomime was playing at Drury Lane, with Herbert Campbell and Harry Nicholls as the two

trump cards. The quiet, unobtrusive humour of Nicholls made an excellent foil to the more robust style of Campbell—though, to be only just, who that is old enough to remember Herbert's soulful addresses to—

"Miss Maud Priscilla
Jemima Miller,
Who takes in a lodger or two,
At Paradise Villa, Paradise Square,
Opposite Paradise View,"

can have doubted that he has felt the *tendresse* which led Rochefoucauld to say: "*Le passion fait souvent un fou du plus habile homme*"?

Anyway, the Campbell-Nicholls dressing-room was shared by Victor Stevens, and, with Walter Slaughter there as often as not, practical joking came like shelling peas, more especially since Campbell had unguardedly remarked that he was sadly in need of a few good songs with which to re-open at the halls at Easter. Incidentally he observed, too, that he never remembered a time at which there was a greater dearth of good song-writers.

That very evening Nicholls and Stevens and Slaughter hatched a plot.

On the second afternoon after that there was a roll of manuscript music, tied with string and superscribed "H. Campbell, Esq., T.R.D.L., stage door. No answer," lying amongst the many letters which encumbered Campbell's dressing-table, and three pairs of mischievous eyes watched him as he tore the wrapper off.

"Hullo! by Jove! a new song-writer at last!" he cried, picking up a small, folded note which fell from the manuscript. And he read it aloud:

"Mr H. Campbell.

"Dear Sir,—I now take pen in hand to say that having long wished to write a song for you and believing I can fit you to a dot, I beg to submit enclosed. Though only an amateur, being a brassworker by profession but also singing in the choir at St Augustine's, Southwark, I don't think I have got a bad ear for music, as brassworkers go, while, as regards poetry I have already had a sidesplitter entitled 'Don't chalk your cue before a lady' accepted by Mr Arthur Roberts. In conclusion, the price of herewith ballad, if required, is ten shillings down and half copyright fees if published, share and share alike and act straight, never having been guilty of a dirty trick and hoping you enjoy the same great blessing, I remain, respectfully yours,

"J. B. Pipewick."

"*P.S.*—A reply addressed c/o Mrs Williams, tobacconist and fancy, Southwark Park Road, S.E., will find any time."

On the suggestion of Slaughter—the arch conspirator!—who forcibly took the manuscript out of Campbell's hand, the melody was tried at the pianoforte, and pronounced excellent. Nor were the verses one whit behind the tune: they scanned perfectly, were intensely funny, and positively contained no allusion whatever either to mothers-in-law, the minor insects of Margate, or the traditional sanctity of St John's Wood—rare qualities indeed in a modern comic song! Campbell was simply delighted with it, and, despatching his dresser to the Strand for the necessary postal-orders, remitted Mr Pipewick his money that very afternoon.

The next day brought a letter of acknowledgment from Pipewick, who not only reiterated his gratitude but declared himself to be so fully persuaded that he had struck his proper groove that he had decided to give up brasswork altogether. "For if I can knock-off a ten-shilling song in less than one hour," he said,

"I reckon that by working only ten hours a day and six days a week to make £1560 a year, and, as household expenses, etc., are under £60, there is no reason why I should not put by the £1500. In ten years, being only twenty-six at the present writing, this would ——"

But Campbell crushed the letter up and threw it in the fire.

Three days, during which a musician arranged band-parts to the melody, rolled by; then came an unexpected letter from the Southwark lyrist. Opening with many apologies, it continued:

"... It galls me like sin to admit it, but I am hungry and I now wish that I had thought twice before chucking up the brass-working which if only poorly paid is anyway more certain than sandpapering comic songs. I been round twice to Mr Peacock, Brassfinisher, Longs Lane S.E., but he says you (I) was so mighty fast at going when I (he) had thirty gross of brass flange-cocks to finish that now you (I) can what I would rather not repeat. Now sir, the sorrows of the poor are not your sorrows, nor the fact that wife is daily expecting confinement and not so much as a crust in the house, but if you could see your way to make that ten shillings twenty, which I hear is a shilling less than the usual price for the most commonplace songs, I should feel obliged. I must now draw to a close with good wishes for a favourable reply and trusting that you are also.

"Yours respectfully, "

Though fully realising that he had acquired an incubus along with his cheap song, Campbell smothered the unworthy thought and his annoyance together, and sent his dresser for another ten-shilling postal-order; but the effect was not lost on the plotters. Two days later, therefore, the letter bearing the S.E. postmark for "H. Campbell, Esq., T.R.D.L.," was still

more distressful. The great comedian coughed uneasily as he opened it and read:

"Poor soul! she had an awful time with something squirted up her arm to lower her pulse and me packed off to Harley Street, West End, for a specialist with only twopence in the wide world and the Blackfriars cars stopped running at that. Grimaldi never said a truer word than the laughter-maker was often the most miserable of all men, though that would not be if laughter-makers would aid each other. If you could spare one sovereign on account of publishing rights, etc., until after much-needed rest I am able to——"

There was a shade of annoyance on Campbell's honest brow and a muttered "Damn the fellow!" in Campbell's usually good-natured voice as he crumpled up the letter and pulled out a sovereign and some coppers in order to respond to this last call, signs, all of them, that warned the conspirators to prepare to strike the final blow. As the evening wore on, however, Campbell's customary urbanity returned, so that the resolution was for a penultimate rather than a determinating strike. By a roundly unanimous vote it came, in a black-edged envelope, too.

"Pen entirely fails to describe depth of misery in which I indite these few lines, the whole wide world is now literary hell——"

"I s'pose he means 'literally,' but he's right either way," quoth Herbert, half aloud.

". . . . I daresay you have guessed it before now. She has gone! Failure of the respiratory organs quickened the sad end of one whose life was utterly devoid of crime. In order to give her lifeless clay the last sad rites in decent shape I have already parted with everything, but am still shy of fifteen shillings on undertaker's lowest estimate. If only you could see your way——"

"All right, my boy, but this is the very last time!" cried the generous fellow, mildly desperate. "William, another postal order wanted!"

But whilst this interesting correspondence had been going on, old Time had been steadily keeping step, and even Drury Lane pantomimes cannot run for ever. In other words the notices were up, and Messrs Nicholls, Stevens and Slaughter had but one more card to play. Agreeing between themselves that their blue-eyed comrade had stood it very well, they magnanimously decided to give him back his final fifteen shillings, and so, two days later still, it returned in this form:

"MR H. CAMPBELL, Sir.—As you was probably not aware when you posted enclosed which arrived by ten o'clock post last night, poor Mr Pipewick passed away after much suffering on second floor of above on Thursday a.m. at 8 a.m. As he leaves no issue only small bill for milk, wood etc., which heaven knows I don't begrudge him, I deem it duty to return your post order. With kind regards, yours obediently, SARAH WILLIAMS."

As the letter dropped from his hands on to his make-up box, Herbert Campbell gave a joyous shout that might almost have been heard in front.

"Now then, boys—Sons o' the Phœnix!" cried he, delightedly, "you're going to stay and take a bit of supper with me at the Albion to-night, all of you! Why? Why, because that blanked song-writer of mine is dead at last!"

CHAPTER VI.

Why Freddie hadn't shaved—Some lunatics that I have met—A favourite axiom of Shirley Brooks'—The barman at the Market House—Bob Noon, the Oxford Circus bookie—Loses his reason over Australian Star—And is visited by two brothers of his craft—A madhouse plunger—And one who, through jealousy, nearly justified—Death in the iron pot—A mad asparagus-grower—A mad petitioner—The distraction of spelling-bees—The tailor and the 'Squire's' cottage—Mythical millionaires—A solatium for Lord Rosebery—More soldiers for the German Army—A lunatic leader-writer—The bluffing of George Griffiths—A memory of a murder at Kentish Town—Of another at Kensington, and—Of a grimly pathetic incident which followed it.

Two dozen of the liveliest men in London were gathering one night in poor Arthur de Vere Smith's maisonette in Mecklenburgh Street, and one of them brazenly sported the stubbles of a beard of two or three days' growth. And when the dainty little hostess, who was one of the best pals that ever man had, noticed it, she reproved the unshorn one with:

"Why, Freddie, you haven't shaved to-day?"

"Shaved!" cried Freddie, with the cheery scorn of injured, but amazed, innocence, the while his wobbly right paw feebly stroked the offending bristles. "Well, seeing that they even hide the butter-knife when I turn up at the breakfast table lest I should

try to cut my throat with it, you don't suppose they'd trust me with a razor, do you?"

Metaphysicians may, and probably will, continue to differ until sheol is frozen over as to the chief causes of insanity in this country, but as metaphysicians are hopelessly encumbered by our Masters in Lunacy, and as Masters in Lunacy are but "barristers of not less than ten years' standing," neither the main, nor any other question is ever likely to be definitely settled; meantime most of the lunatics that have come my way have taken the 'dip' route. Doubtless excessive love-making, the cheap cigarette, the opium pipe, the hypodermic syringe, are no less effective, each accomplishing its work without pomp or ostentation; but alcohol—or alcohol and backing horses, mixed—never fails to combine punctuality and despatch. How strongly this great truth was impressed upon our youthful minds at No. 52 is illustrated by an incident which happened on a certain bright spring morning when Peter Blobbs had just come up from Master's place in Kent, and Shifter had returned from yachting in the Solent. Both were feeling absolutely fit—a bit above themselves, in fact—and it was agreed in celebration of their joyousness that each should write an obituary notice of the other and pigeonhole it for future use. Blobbs set the pace by writing this of Shifter:

"——True to the last to his favourite Strand, he lived to be revered by generations of the most brilliant men and women of the day, and his death at the age of seventy-five, when his faculties were still, happily, unimpaired, has left an aching void in Bohemia not easy to be filled. The last sad obsequies will be performed at Brompton to-morrow."

Enclosing this in a pink envelope, Shirley placed it

in his desk. Meanwhile Shifter had written this of Peter Blobbs:

"In this charming spot, surrounded by his affectionate wife and family, and all the friends whom he had rendered happy through life, he spent the mellow autumn of his existence, and, passing away at the age of eighty-three, exemplified by the universal grief of the nation the fact that the human intellect is second to no other agency in arousing the sympathies of our fellow men. Westminster Abbey would be a fitting honour for the remains of one who may well be described as the wit of his day."

Then they went off to lunch with the boys of the Scots Guards on duty at the Tower, ultimately returning to the old Spooferies at about 2 a.m. with graphic accounts of the place where Herod smothered the babes in the wood, the Shot Tower, the Half-Shot Tower, and the Tater's Gate, and generally in such a condition that it was apparent to all that, whatever interesting objects of antiquity they had seen, nothing could have been much older than the Pommery. After which, Shifter piloted a select party around Covent Garden, which he considered particularly his own by right of discovery, not so much of the garden itself as of the fact that the Market House Tavern opened two hours after midnight and dispensed the hottest of Mocha coffee and the most pungent of West Indian rum, which, taken together, put a man in the best possible vein to go and buy cut flowers at auction until breakfast time.

Later in the day Peter dropped into the office, and, destroying the obituary notice of his comrade which reposed in the pink envelope, substituted the following:

"——Ruined alike in character, fortune, and health, whatever glimmerings of talent he had displayed were quenched in alcohol at an early date. It is notorious that of late years he had lived

entirely on the small sums which he borrowed from inebriate visitors at disreputable restaurants, and, perishing at the age of thirty-three, he points a moral without adorning a tale. The funeral expenses will be defrayed by subscription among the female choristers of the Gaiety Theatre."

Shifter, dropping into the office still later in the day and finding the above lying open on Shirley's desk, as promptly revised *his* obituary :

"——It is sad to relate that this somewhat promising young man died in abject want, the coroner attributing his untimely end to dissipation and excess. At the suggestion of the foreman, the jury generously handed their fees to the wretched female who was the sole witness, and who appeared to feel her ignominious position acutely. A fund is being raised for the interment, but latest advices go to show that the expense will be undertaken by the parochial authorities."

It was an oft-repeated axiom of Shirley's that all the world was mad, those mortals being the maddest, indeed, who did not know or would not acknowledge it, and the daily tally of idiotic things done by reputedly sane people warrants the suspicion that they must surely have gone wool-gathering. The news came along in the black hours of one early morning—heaven only knows *how* it came, but ill news travels mysteriously—that the head barman of the very tavern I have spoken of, had developed extraordinary symptoms.

"He has gone clean off his rocker," said the harbinger, "and is not only serving the market-men with anything they choose to call for, but is giving change out of nothing, as well. Go up and have a look at him."

And a most extraordinary sight it was. The bar literally swarmed with greedy, struggling market-

porters all crying out one against the other for 'goes' of coffee and gin, pints of mild and bitter, sausages and pickles, and whatever else was in sight. And loud above the hum of all the 'orders' was the oft-repeated yell of "J'yer, where's my change?" so that the peccant paws of the demented potman were never off the taps save when they were in the till. In the end he bolted for the cellars, where the police found him, barking like a dog and butting his head against the barrels.

A less unpleasant lunatic of my acquaintance was an old chap named Robert Noon, who until two years ago used to make a little forty or fifty pound book at Oxford Circus. In his case imbecility arose from overlaying—by which I do not infer attempted infanticide on Bob's mother's part. Bob simply overlaid his book, from tens down to fours, against Australian Star for the City and Suburban, and when the news that the big black Waler had won in a canter by half a dozen lengths reached London, old Bob went up into the hayloft in one act. He had been going wrong all that well-remembered afternoon. They'd backed the Ita filly with him for the Betchworth stakes, and when College Queen rolled up in the Tadworth it was no more good to him than a stomachache. As in his mind's eye he saw his balance melt he began to act queerly, and to attract the passing attention of the promenading coppers, but when the result of the big event arrived, and he attempted to disrobe in public at the corner of Margaret Street, the fixed-point man came up and pinched him without more ado.

They stowed old Robert Noon away, babbling, not of green fields, but of "ten-blow-up-and-down,"

and "any-to-come-all-on," in a large and beautiful lunatic asylum where the scent of the new-mown hay and the dog-roses came in at the open windows like a breath from Paradise, and where the beautiful young nurses and the equally fair young doctors sang evensongs at sunset, and then went to bed early to read Schopenhauer and other good books by the light of a candle placed on the medicine cupboard at the bed-head—at least, so I am told. In any case it is far pleasanter to believe (as I do) that harsh measures are entirely abolished in these institutions, and that gentleness and kindness only are employed in restraining the poor wanderer with the perennial light of the moon in his eyes, and the soul that has to have a paperweight put on it every time a breeze springs up.

Under these tranquil conditions Bob's mental plight could not help improving, and it was not long before he was able to thank the doctor for his morning visits and report that the flea he slept with seemed gentler. He also added, in the nicely-turned phrase generally employed by the retiring pugilist who is taking a roadside pub, that he would be "pleased to see all old and new friends when in the neighbourhood." On this perfectly reasonable request being transmitted by letter to one of the leading lights of Tattersall's Ring, two of the smaller ready-money fry who may prefer to remain unindicated, volunteered to go down to the asylum in Surrey and shed a little of the sunshine of old friendship over the lunie's gloom.

And how strangely docile and out-of-place old Bob did look to his visitors, standing there between his ears, and clad, as they had never seen him before,

in a blue cotton dressing-gown! But he was still old Bob Noon, sure enough, for when, for want of knowing better, the embarrassed pair blurted out some joint expressions of sympathy, the old fielder of Oxford Circus glowed with the old-time zeal, and cried:

"You ain't got no call to feel sorry for me, cullies; they're all backers of 'orses in 'ere; they punts in grub, an' cigarettes, an' fruit, an' all sorts o' things, and I'm over-round on the book every race. Which reminds me! The old bloke in the end cubicle over there is a dead plunger, an' to-day he's got me in a bit of a tangle. He had a suet dumplin' on the first winner at eleven to eight *on*, an' I'm jiggered if I can figger out just what I've got to pay him!" The greeting of the South Sea Islanders is the rattling of a whale-tooth necklace, and the Otaheite Islanders tightly twist each other's shirt tails; but for rugged warmth and sincerity nothing could have exceeded the spontaneity with which the two good men from Tatt's gripped their old chum's fists, for it was abundantly clear to them that he was becoming himself again.

There was another lowly turfite, a contemporary of old Robert Noon's, though a far less honourable individual, who was driven nearly over reason's boundary by insane jealousy, but who recognised the truth in time and pulled up. From prudent reasons I will refer to this hero simply as Bill; and Bill had got, stowed away somewhere, a couple of thousand pounds, all made by ramping and welshing, when he took unto himself a third wife, a young woman nearly forty years his junior. If one may doubt the wisdom, one can but admire the pluck that prompts such a

proceeding. As to the decency of it, why, a fellow has no time to waste on squeamishness at sixty! Only the other day there was laid to rest a certain dear old warrior, who, like Bill, espoused a third partner, and that at an unseemly early date after the passing of his second. His friends remonstrated with him warmly, saying, "Surely you will wait a little longer; it is only three weeks since poor dear Maria was taken." "True, true," he replied in all good faith, though with the natural resentment of one who has a perfect defence to offer, "but you see, when poor dear Maria was dead I had done with her."

To an ex-fighting man I was indebted for William's story, and, in including it in these memories I feel that it would be a pity to rob it of the distinctive diction in which it was poured out to me.

"They hadn't been married much more'n a month," said my narrator, "when Bill was fool enough to take a little furnished villa at Thames Ditton so as to sorter blend the missis's honeymoon with the Kempton, Sandown an' 'Urst Park meetin's all fallin' about that time. No ordinary racin' man can go a-pilotin' petticoats to racin' centres without bumpin' up against somethink out o' the ordinary occasionally, but on the day that Bill's nerves got the knock it was arranged for the missis to stop at home an' cook the bit o' dinner against Bill got back from 'Urst Park at six o'clock, an', by the same token, I rec'lect it happens on a Friday. Afore Bill starts off he app'ints dinner for six o'clock, bites his missus in the mouth like as he was proud to 'ave the privilege, an' goes down the road like a human cyclone. He felt as he was aheadin' straight for supremacy, and was agoin' the limit or about to bust a hamstring, but

arrived on the course his arrogance received a bit of a check. The very fust thing as he claps eyes on is a gentlemanly bloke as he remembered he'd 'w'd' at Epsom, right back in the City an' Suburban week, when 'ope was young and Survivor considered a pinch. Well, this cove is a-talkin' to old Bob Moody, the Jockey Club janitor, like sixty, an' Bill clearly sees that its useless for him to think of goin' into Tatt's to-day. For a time he 'angs about outside, but as you well know, it's no 'class' outside, no 'class' whatever, an' only likely to go against him in future operations, so he decided to call it a blank day an' wander home quietly to the villa to dinner, takin' a damper or two on the way.

"Bill eventually reaches home, but—his missis ain't there! For a minute or two he can 'ardly believe it. He goes to the stairs an' calls up 'Lou, Lou!' but on'y the echo of his own voice answers him. She's gone! To confirm his worst suspicions he goes up to the little front bedroom with its clematis and virginny creeper a-growin' all over the winders, but her 'at's gone, an' her feather boa, an' her gloves—oh, indeed he takes it for granted as she's flown proper. 'To 'ell with the lot of 'em, they're all alike, from Jezebel down'ards!' he cries in his rage, 'though I reely *did* think different of Lou. Well, this cops the curranty!'

"At all such times a man generally does some pretty active thinkin', an' you can bet your soul old Bill was a-calculatin' hard. To stave off brain-founderin' he puts on his 'at, an' goes up the road to 'The Angler of the Mole,' a decent little house kep' by an old chap as used to play the cornet on the Ampton Court boats in the days when they was

doin' big, an' he has forty 'ard thinks. At last he utterly gets his thinker out of whack an' goes back to the villa; but, of course, he can't settle down. Three—four—five times he gets up, an' goes back to 'The Angler,' each time a-doin' a couple o' long drinks to drown his ugly thoughts. I reckon if his missis had ha' turned the corner with a parrymoor just as old Bill was returnin' from one o' them alcoholic excursions he'd ha' pounded the pair of 'em into a shapeless mass that couldn't even ha' been photographed for the *P'lice News*. Finally he gets a bit leg-weary, an' none the better for all the syrup he'd had. He draws a wooden cheer afront o' the kitchen fire an' sits down for his seventy-fifth think. As he sinks into the cheer and gazes vacantly at the kitchener in front of him, his stare rests on a big iron saucepan, the lid o' which is agitated by somethink what's within, an' keeps on a-rattlin' like a pair of Oldham clogs on a tin roof. Bill thinks shall he murder her if ever she returns; then, growin' maudlin, he says to himself, 'If the great King Solomon, cracked up as the 'bodiment o' wisdom, was a-tellin' the truth when he said as he couldn't fathom the way of a man with a maid, lordlummy! where *would* he ha' been if he'd ha' tried to tackle the ways o' modern men with married wimmin!' As all this trouble is a-runnin' through his mind the lid o' the saucepan raises itself about two inches, an'——a livin' 'ead looks out! It's a dull grey in colour, an' about the size of a dorg's; but its teeth is long an' clinched together an' its eyes is wide open an' bloodshot. 'Gordstrooth!' shouts Bill, a-jumpin' up like as if a battalion of 'ornets 'ad suddenly emerged from a knot 'ole in the wooden cheer, 'whatever was it?' But the lid's

shut down again ; the vision's gone, an' with so much anxiety of other sorts on his mind, old Bill begins to think o' the big trouble again. Till two hours ago he would ha' staked his little wad on Lou, which on'y shows you what a mug's game plungin' is. Certainly he'd lost her now, but the bets hadn't gone with the stakes, which was some sort of consolation. And what if he should meet her in the future? Should he 'put her through it'? He had scarcely framed the thought when the lid of the saucepan rose again, and the 'ideous 'ead, with its green-shanked teeth an' its bleary eyes, grinned out at 'im again! Old Bill shook like an ashpan leaf, as the sayin' is. He grabbed up the poker to aim a blow at the thing, but, as if satisfied at 'avin' skeered him, it went down again of its own accord an' the lid fell shut. Bill got up an' walked out to the little garding gate.

"An' who should come round the corner at that minute, but Lou! Bill's own little missis, an' lookin' as sweet as Maud Muller 'erself! She was a-carryin' a little basket on her arm with a couple o' pound o' kidney pertaters, an' a lettuce, an' a vegetable marrer in it. 'Oh lor, Bill,' says she as she come up, 'I'm reely fit to drop. I declare I've 'ad to walk arf way to Surbiton to find a decent greengrocer's, but I'd determined to get you a marrer, knowin 'ow fond you was of 'em. By the way, what brings yer 'ome as early as this?' Bill turned his 'ead away, for he felt ashamed of 'isself. 'An' to think,' as he said to me arterwards, 'as I'd arraigned 'er an' tried 'er an' without judge or jury, found 'er guilty, an' damn near sentenced 'er to death—all in 'er absence!' Anyway he didn't make 'er no answer till they got indoors, an' then he told 'er as he'd saw a party as he

didn't wanter see, so he thought as he'd come 'ome 'n keep 'er company. At that she kissed 'm, an', goin' 'crost the room to the dresser, she takes up three or four rashers o' streaky bacon. 'An' what's the bacon for, my gal?' asks old Bill, observin of 'er. 'For dinner, Bill,' says she. 'What, fried or toasted?' asks Bill. 'Nyether, but stewed with the rest,' says she; and with that she goes towards the stove. Bill pipes 'er off an' stampedes after her acrost the room like a wounded buffylow. He grasps 'er by the arm, jest as she's about to pull off the saucepan-lid, an' he shouts out 'No—no—no, I say! Don't touch that there lid, for Gawd's sake!' 'Why, Bill,' says she, turnin' as white as a sheet, 'whatever is the matter?' 'I dunno what the 'ell it *is*,' says the old man, still 'oldin' 'er back from the stove, 'but there's a 'ungry apparition o' some kind in that saucepan that ain't human. It looks to me like a dragon with the tape-worm, but, take my tip, pile some more wood on the fire an' boil the blighter to bits!' Lor! how she did laugh as she give old Bill a playful slap on the cheek an' then shook 'erself free. 'Bill, Bill, Bill!' cries she, in a woman's wheedlin' way, 'I really didn't take you for such a baby!' Then she lifted the lid—what ho! 'Why,' says she, 'I do declare you've been a-settin' there an' let this saucepan gallop, instead o' simmer, an'—this beautiful Ostend rabbit's nearly boiled to rags. No wonder the lid jumped up an'—well I never, *I forgot to take its eyes out*!' Old Bill said he felt a bit small as he went back to 'The Angler' for a gin-an'-bitters while she laid the cloth, but he didn't mind that 'cos he was so 'appy!"

Of the total of the good souls who have been at

one time and another what I may term affiliated Pink 'Un's, and who, from other causes than drink, have become inmates of private asylums and licensed homes, I scarcely dare to think. There was one poor chap who went crazy because he could not raise asparagus like the pictures in the seedsmen's catalogues, and, in the same retreat, was an old gentleman with whom Shifter used to spend many lucid afternoons, who had become crackbrained from studying cosines. If you had been visiting the asparagus man he would ask you as you took your leave, if you were going straight home. Upon receiving an answer in the affirmative he would produce from under his bed a halfpenny bundle of firewood, one end of which was wrapped in blue tissue paper, and this would be, "A little bundle of grass of my own growing, as a present to your wife"; whilst Shifter's friend would invariably entrust him with the delivery of a petition to the Lord Chancellor. Punctuation was one of this amiable old gentleman's crotchets, and almost every word in his petitions was followed by either a comma, a semi-colon, or a note of interrogation. He also created the immortal adjective which lends distinction to his otherwise commonplace sentence:

"Writhing!, under ;, the burden—of this ;, Billingsgaterian?, abuse——"

As Willie indignantly avowed, genius alone, not lunacy, could evolve 'Billingsgaterian.'

That our own little circle of idlers contributed more than one 'case' during the spelling-bee craze of seventeen years ago was as natural a consequence as the oak tree is of the planted acorn, the greatest pity being that both our candidates had been public school boys and both were remedying the defects of that form of

education by becoming expert orthographists. Much other useful knowledge they were acquiring, too. For instance, the spelling class being seated at a table laden with the best of liquor and tobacco that the chosen restaurant of the moment could supply, the gentleman who had lost the last 'life'—say Kim Mandeville, since he was an ardent votary of the game—would begin with:

"L."

"Small l," followed the man from Gorgonzola Hall, who was privately known to be ardently interested at the moment in a damsel from Cambria.

"A," put in old Major Bob, having previously roared at his predecessor, "I hope you're not relying on any damned Welsh word, because I'm not!"

"M," bleated Shifter.

"Really—er—dontcherknow—er," objected the gilt-edged novice who had just been made a member, "I really, 'pon my soul, *must* challenge."

"Llamiter is the word," observed Willie, quietly, "an acolyte in the Greek Church." Instantly Peter Blobbs, who was the next man, said that it was quite right, as he himself had a second cousin, a Russian, who was a Llamiter; and Fat George, arriving opportunely and mixing it all up with lampreys, said that Llamiters were his favourite supper when in season; indeed the fishmonger at Charing Cross had standing orders to set aside for him the first creel of Llamiters that came into the market; while Kim Mandeville guessed he'd shoot glass balls against any Llamiter breathing; and the major, growing reminiscent, remarked that when Llamiter won the Derby he must have been at least a ten-year-old; and the man from Gorgonzola Hall swore that it was like finding

money to pick up all the Llamiters A that were to be had at 2⅝ before the closing of bear accounts.

With so much weight against him, the neophyte simply marvelled at his own lack of knowledge and paid up like a brick—though, to be sure, one of his sort did stand out most obstinately on one occasion, when Pot Stephens, being stuck with "E, a, g, l——," added 'o,' and then swore "by Aaron's rod" that 'eaglometer' was "a well-known instrument used in measuring the wings of eagles"!

It was about this time that the late George Alexander Baird, whose *nom de course* was 'Mr Abington,' nearly sent a Bond Street tailor off his nut by the loan of his cottage at Newmarket. The man of pantaloons and promissory-notes was recovering from a long illness and yearned to recuperate in a bracing atmosphere—than which none that I know of can surpass that of Newmarket. "Pack up and go down this very afternoon," said the good-natured squire, "and I will send a wire from Vigo Street telling my servants to treat you precisely as they would treat me." And the tailor wheezed out his thanks. Arriving at the cottage not later than ten o'clock that night, he quite scared the housekeeper by expressing a desire to go to bed, but the good soul, recovering herself, said that she would "send out for 'em," and before the tailor had solved the problem he found himself engaged in a playful rough-and-tumble boxing match with a couple of professional pugilists, from whom he was eventually rescued by a brace of ringside roughs who rudely pulled all his clothes off, and tore off his boots, and carried him upstairs to bed by the head and the heels. Nor was this all, for when he rang his bedroom bell in the morning to demand an explanation, the same two

men appeared, and, after forcing him to partake of a mahogany-hued brandy-and-milk, thrust him into breeches and gaiters and bore him off to the bare, bleak Heath to ride a racehorse in a trial.

The worship of the golden calf is a potent factor in mental irresponsibility, too, and the keeper of a certain licensed retreat which stands within a mile of the starting-post at Kempton Park, had lately (and may have still) two souls with but a single crux—the mythical possession of countless millions. The first, the gentleman in the blue room at the end of the ground floor passage, never allowed his cheque-book to go out of his hands, nor his elbow to stir from his writing-table. Pinkish cheques were his, properly stamped, perforated and bound in book form, and costing his family perhaps five shillings a thousand. "What has been going on in the world to-day?" he would ask of his visitor or his attendant, and the latter (for preference) would answer, "Why, Mr Gubbin's Galtee More has beaten Lord Rosebery's Velasquez for the Derby." "Dear me!" the madman would exclaim. "And have you any reason to think that Lord Rosebery needed the money?" "Not a doubt of it, my dear sir," the custodian would reply; "and what is more, I hear to-night that Cork Street won't look at his lordship's paper unless he can get the names of all three of his brothers-in-law on it!" "Then," the lunie would say bravely, "I will certainly send the poor gentleman a million. A sheet of note-paper, please." And he would write:

"My Dear Lord Rosebery,—I sympathise with you most sincerely upon the defeat of your splendid horse, Velasquez, to-day, but be of good heart, for, despite the supine attacks of Dr

Parker of the City Temple and the vituperative abuse of Mr W. T. Stead—

> "'Whose native cheek, where facts are weak,
> In triumph brings him through!'

the great British Public adores a horse-racing Prime Minister, and I trust that you may soon return to Power. Meantime I beg the honour of your acceptance of the enclosed cheque for one million.—I have the honour to remain, etc."

"Anything else?" he would enquire as he sealed Lord Rosebery's envelope, and the wily gaoler, after gazing all round the ceiling to gain time, would answer, "Why, yes, sir, during a bit of a breeze in the German Reichstag, Count von Bülow has declared that Germany's only secure pledge of peace is in increasing her present military strength." "Aye, the voice is Bülow's, but the words are the Emperor's!" the poor gentleman would exclaim; "but *I* will buy him some more soldiers; five million pounds' worth!" So a cheque for five millions, with a suitable note, would be addressed to Berlin. Mere thousands he handed out like handbills, and drafts for single hundreds were offered to metropolitan magistrates, for their poor-boxes, in the same spirit of surprised humility that led Lord Courtenay to exclaim, on seeing a friend give a crown to some nigger-minstrels on a racecourse, "What! Will they take *silver*?"

As soon as the warder considered that his charge had taken enough manual exercise he would make the discovery that it was post time, and, putting all the letters in a basket, and the basket, with much labour, on his shoulders, would disappear with it. But, once outside the blue-room door, his journey was a short one. At the other end of the passage was the pink room, and in it sat a gentleman with dark

streaming hair and a complexion like winter sunshine falling on a snow-bank. He had once been a flowery leader-writer on a great daily newspaper, and a striking photograph of himself, taken between literary pangs, adorned the wall. He talked rapidly, and some of the expressions embraced in his lurid vocabulary were, to put it mildly, startling; but the postman had been in the police and was therefore familiar with the nature of an oath. "Aha, at *last*!" this poor creature would cry, as the letters from the blue room were poured out upon the table, and he began to slit the envelopes with a paper-knife, "I was beginning to fear that the postman was never coming! And what have we here—ah, money, curse it, money, and nothing but money! How I wish somebody would dun me, just for a change. However, thanks to the judicious investments of my youth, I have money to burn! money to lancinate! money to tear into strips—ha-ha!" And, in about a brace of shakes, the whole apartment would be littered by the fragments of the monstrous cheques. I wonder if the blue room runs the pink room still!

I have never had the moral courage, or the 'front,' to tell a dun that he was mad, but it would have broken no new ground to have done so, for, two winters ago, whilst a great many bookies, probably far less solvent than he, were dodging the chilly blasts and pea-soup skies of January in southern climes, old George Griffiths, the Safe Man, was to be found patrolling the Strand on the slender off-chance of falling across a stray defaulter and raking in 'a bit of the old.' Maybe he remembered how Dick Dunn once hobbled out into his orchard at Norbiton in his gout boots to inspect the wreck of a balloon which

had just struck the ground at a twenty-mile gait, and instantly recognised among the unconscious aëronauts a chap who had unostentatiously retired from flat-racing owing him forty-seven over Crowberry. For George, like almost any other man of robust body, broad mind, and keen observation who has taken the thick with the clear on our British racecourses for upwards of forty years, is a strange mixture of hope, and humour, and pathos—in short, a philosopher. I came across him as he was returning from Plumpton with a severe chill—so intense, indeed, at the back of the neck that he did not disdain my invitation to try whisky on it; "albeit" (as the best turf-writers say) it may be quite wrong of me to mention so purely personal a matter.

Did I know a certain Captain Leigh-Haynes?

Aye! that I did right well, and long life to him, for it would take a chilling day and nothing less than the proclamation of universal peace with Tattersall's to compel *his* surrender.

"You seem to have his measure with some exactness," observed old George, quietly. "He lives that Truth may die; but let me tell you 'bout how he's played hookum-snivvy with *me*! As I always told my partner, Phil Goode, he's a 'snapper'; that's what he is, a 'snapper.' You mayn't meet him racing for weeks together, but as sure as you lower your guard and pipe out 'Field a pony!' he'll spring up out o' the earth at your very feet with 'Yes, *me*!' and then he's away across the ring before you've time to shout 'No bet!' He put this gag on us for a tenner over a winner at Plumpton in June, and my partner, Phil, didn't get half mad about it! Personally, I didn't mind the tenner so much as I deplored his having

got on to the book; and I wish he'd ha' drawn his tenner and gone away with it, but he left it down, and, before the day was out he—owed us sixty-five!"

I had, I must admit, some difficulty in suppressing a yawn.

"I dessay," old George continued, noticing my apathy, "this part o' the story bears a strong family likeness to something you may have heard before, but presently the play diverges, the plot expands. On the following day, which was Saturday, he crowded his bad luck for another twenty-six, making ninety-one in all, for which I dropped him a polite note on the Sunday to the club of which he claimed to be a member. But he vouchsafed us no reply. Many moons have paled and waned since then, but this very afternoon, at Plumpton, I ran right slap up against him! Our surprise might have been mutual if his had been sincere; but while I gently detained him with my right while my left went inside the breast of my coat in search of my settling-book, he tried to freeze my marrow with a stony glare. 'Parding the intrusion, capting,' I began, mincingly, 'but there's a little outstanding account of ninety-one o' the best that I should like to direct your attention to.' He made a gentle stall to shy. '*My* attention?' said he, incredulously. 'Why, what's it for?' 'Debts incurred by backin' horses at this very identical meeting as long ago as last June, capting,' said I, rather more severely, as I pulled out the red ledger; 'let me give you the names of the animals.' 'Oh, tut-tut, good fellow!' cried he, putting on an amused look just as though he hadn't been on earth since the year o' the big wind, 'why, I never set foot on this course in my life before this morning, and only came then in order

to see what sort of a place it was that Pratt's had taken up! You are dreaming, old man—*dreaming*; yet stay, that curiously comical head — that odd light in the eyes—yes, yes it is, I see it all—come, tell me, old fellow, *how are the crops looking in Mars*?'"

It was the biggest bluff the old Safe Man had steered up against, but he took his physic bravely. "For once I was outpointed," he owned with some humility, "but—lordlummy, *don't* the 'heads' get hot?"

From madness to murder is but a very short step, and the penultimate note of the few from which I write this chapter takes the form of a cutting from the *Daily Mail* of July 15th, 1898, which runs:

> Captain King, formerly in the Berkshire Yeomanry, and living at 28 Pont Street, S.W., was seized with illness while in a hansom cab in Piccadilly yesterday afternoon, and died on reaching the Berkeley Hotel.

And I reproduce it here for the reason that poor King and I were once jointly suspected, if only for a few hours, of being concerned in the commission of a double murder.

Augustus Wallis King was a slight, good-looking man, rather below the middle height, with fair hair and a complexion like that of a wax doll. He was very rich, kept up a country house in Worcestershire and another in Wales; but his hobby was driving and horse-dealing, and had he been born the son of a livery-stable keeper instead of a gentleman, he would certainly have held his own in the business. He was not given to dissipation, and even when on pleasure

bent he, like John Gilpin, had a frugal mind. It generally happens that a young man who inherits a vast fortune speedily becomes entangled with a woman, or, if his tastes do not happen to lie in that direction, his male companions contrive to steer him up against a racing 'coup,' or a little game at cards in which they are not wholly disinterested. But to the best of my knowledge and belief King steered clear of all this sort of thing, which is all the more remarkable since his favourite lunching place and almost his only resort for an occasional peg was a well-known bar where the chevaliers are always strongly in evidence. All this, however, is beside the point.

King and I had been for a longish drive on the Great North Road one day, and the gathering shades of night found us at the 'Jack Straw's Castle' on Hampstead Heath. Had King been a coachman who bustled his cattle we should have been back in town discussing grilled pig's-feet at the Criterion probably—but he was always most regardful of the comforts of his horses and never upset them however urgent the occasion. There was not much moonlight when we started, but it was a very pleasant night, and no road that I am acquainted with could be prettier under such circumstances than that by which the descent into St John's Wood is made. The planes and beeches, punctuated here and there by a sombre sycamore, almost hid the old-fashioned gabled houses on either side of the road, and everything was so quiet that we might have been entering a hamlet of the dead. Presently there came an unwelcome change in the regular 'click click' of our horses' shoes, and, remarking that he thought that the mare had picked

up a loose stone, King pulled in near the kerbstone on the off-side.

We had halted at the corner of a road that seemed to shun investigation by curving round abruptly to the left, and King got down to ascertain the nature of the mare's mishap. It turned out that she had picked up a bit of flint, the sharp edges of which had bruised and cut her frog rather badly. I must needs get down, too, to look at the injured foot, and, as I stood there with the mare's pastern in my hand and my chum bending over me, there came a strange noise from the thoroughfare at the back of us that caused us both to pause and listen. It sounded like a heavy body falling on a heap of stones; but as no cry followed the thud—such as one might have expected to hear had it been a person stumbling by accident or a drunkard coming a cropper—we paid no further attention to it. I re-mounted the phæton, and King followed me, just as a police-constable, who came strolling up the hill in rubber boots, but seemed to us to spring literally out of the earth itself, halted in his rounds and wished us good-night.

Almost before I was out of bed on the following morning, my lofty and but half-furnished rooms re-echoed the resounding double-knock of the telegraph boy, who brought a wire from King to this effect:

We are jointly suspected of a double murder. Police have already seen me, and are coming on to you.

Wallis.

It transpired that, shortly after we had driven away from our halting place there were found lying on a heap of stones—rough, broken granite for road-repairing—

just round the corner to which I have alluded, the dead bodies of a young woman and a child. In life they had been the wife and daughter of a mechanic named Hogg, of Kentish Town, and had been decoyed by Hogg's paramour to her lodgings and there murdered. After doing the injured innocents to death, the murderess bundled their offending bodies into the bassinette-perambulator in which the infant had ridden, and, under cover of the darkness, wheeled her awful burden to the quiet road, at the very corner of which we had pulled up to investigate the cause of the mare's lameness. A comparison of times proves beyond question that the queer noise heard by King and myself as we stood examining the horse's foot was the sound made by the two bodies as the murderess tipped them out of the perambulator, which she subsequently took to, and abandoned in, Hamilton Terrace. The policeman in the rubber boots, who knew us both by sight, made a note of his meeting with us, and—hence the subsequent formal enquiries.

This woman was hanged at Newgate on Tuesday, Dec. 23rd, 1890, her execution being marked by most disorderly scenes outside the now demolished prison. "The ringing of the dying woman's funeral bell," says one account, "had no effect upon the crowd, many of whom were women, and obscene and ribald jokes could be heard among every group, the females especially being fiercely denunciatory of the convict's conduct. . . . At one minute past eight o'clock a yell from the crowd proclaimed the fact that the black flag was hoisted, and, directly after, the crowd gave vent to their feelings in a loud cheer which was taken up again and again by the scattered groups all down

the Old Bailey." Even the Brighton *Argus* callously headed its account of the hanging:—

EARLY SPORTING

THE EXECUTION OF MRS. PEARCEY.

When one dallies with the subject of lunacy, however, laughter and death become mere interchangeable terms, and, often enough, are linked together. It must be still fresh in the public mind how on a Sunday night in November '94 a demented young man escaped from a private asylum in North Kensington, and, overtaking an unfortunate female in the Holland Park Road, cut her throat 'from ear to ear,' as usage has fashioned the phrase. It was an unfortunate happening for Holland Park Road, which from a peaceable, and even select, thoroughfare, was transformed, as soon as the news spread, into a howling parade of morbid sightseers. Backwards and forwards and to and fro these dreadful people swarmed, followed in the roadway by every costermonger in Notting Hill who could raise a barrow. And as every hoodlum that came to view the scene brought his mordacious and insatiable appetite with him, oranges and bananas and almond-whelks and Barcelona nuts found an instant sale and caused the pavements to be strewn

with refuse. To this sordid scene, on taking observation bent, came Paul Merritt, the playwright, whose kindly disposition, if not whose inherited traits, had burdened him with close on twenty stone of flesh. On the paving stones outside Val Prinsep's door, within a yard of where the murderer pounced upon his victim, stood a policeman, and Merritt, approaching the officer, asked:

"Constable, could you indicate the very spot on which the poor woman fell?"

Even as Paul spoke the words he trod upon a piece of orange-peel and dropped, with a mighty thud, to half-mast. The constable gazed at the playwright who had taken his seat so suddenly, and somewhat amused and not noticing the look of agony which had overspread his features, replied with a grin:

"Why, strike-me-lucky, you're actually a-sittin' on it!"

But Merritt had uttered his last words on earth: barely did the cab in which they put him get him to his home before he passed away.

CHAPTER VII.

Bessie Bellwood's hansom panels—The methods of lightning novelists—Pink 'Uns and the Forfeit List—Of trophy-hunters—Knight of the Thistle's Hunt Cup—Trayles' Gold Cup—And St Gatien's—Jesse Winfield—And his lucrative foreign policy—Jesse meets the Queen of Spain—Old Jack Dickinson threatens the Duke of Beaufort—'The boys' at Stockbridge—A curate with a black eye—Doing the ringkeepers—The kitchen dodge at Lingfield—Chippy Norton—And myself at Croxton Park—Chippy and his watch-chain—Twice with one trick—Bob Sinclair, the high-class sharp—Plays faro on the nod—And settles with his conscience—An Ascot tail-piece.

ONE of the first luxuries that the late lamented Bessie Bellwood indulged in when her early artistic successes were confirmed by the London and County Banking Company, was a private hansom of her very own with her crest and motto emblazoned on its panels. To the somewhat majestic crest of her choice she may, poor cheery soul, have had no right whatever, but her chosen motto was absolutely and indisputably her own, and its like probably never figured in a carriage-builder's order-book before or since—'Poor, but Busy.' Would that I might honestly adopt the badge as my own, for I am a fortuneless journalist, hopelessly addicted to the old-fashioned and laborious, one-man-one-job method of writing my stories with a pen, an implement which is rapidly becoming extinct in literary

workshops. But wrong-headed as I may be, I cannot forsake the tricks and methods of my 'prentice days, wherefore I must continue to flounder till I am passed by my juniors who, encouraged by the example of Rossetti who never learned to draw, have elected to begin at the top and 'chance the ducks.'

Shortly after breakfast on one morning of last summer I called at the beautiful riparian residence of a brother novelist, but one who belongs to the new school, and found him and his interesting wife just rising from the table. The literary work which they jointly produce may not outlive them, but as they manage to live devilish well (pardon the deplorable but accurate epithet!) in the meantime, that sad reflection loses them no sleep. "Ah, here you are!" they cried in chorus; and the male bird added, "Our electric landaulette will be round directly, and if you will smoke a cigar whilst I knock off eight or nine thousand words, we will run you over to Twyford." Eight or nine thousand words while I smoke a cigar! Most marvellous youth! Yet he accomplished it, and all within the space of seventeen minutes.

Stepping into a room in which six or seven phonographs stood on as many tables, he asked of a secretary, "What do you want this morning, Dalton?" Dalton consulted a note-book and replied: "About two thousand for *The Voiceless Steersman*, sir; two thousand for *Lady Violetta's Vengeance*; rather less for *Castles in the Clouds*; and about three for *Where Jamshyd Gloried*." "Righto!" answered my light-hearted litterateur. "Switch on Lady Vi first. What's the last paragraph?" The amanuensis turned to some typewritten sheets which lay upon one of the phonograph tables and read out: "'Begone!' cried Lady

Violetta, flinging the priceless jewels into the fire and pointing imperiously to the door, 'Begone!' And the black-hearted Lord Adalberte turned upon his heel and slunk, panther-like, from the apartment, cursing Lady Violetta bitterly in the purest French."

"Good!" said the lightning novelist; then, stepping up to the receiver of the graph, he continued the piffle, dictating, seemingly without an effort: "A few months later the village of Turmutborough was gay with marriage festivities. Never, the villagers declared, had the place seen so fine a wedding as that of the Honourable Selwyn Tremayne to Lady Violetta Veynecourt. To most people it seemed that Lord Adalberte de Steyne had changed somewhat during the past few months. His hair was now——" etc.

But I stray. I am, as I said before, a fortuneless scribbler; but Pliny, who was a bold and fearless writer, as is proved by the fact that back in the dark dawn of the Christian era he not only invented, but freely used, the word 'ornithology,' divided the bird tribe into two classes—No. 1, those which sit up at night; and No. 2, those which do not. Applying the same rule of classification to owners of racehorses, we get—No. 1, those who race for glory and gold pots; and No. 2, those who are only out for the base yellow metal. To show how both classes may labour in vain, it need only be mentioned that whilst the excellent John Corlett has been for over a quarter of a century industriously endeavouring—

> "Like the ancient Medes and Persians,
> Always by his own exertions,"

to breed an animal capable of bringing the Gold Vase from Ascot to Bottombarley, there has existed

in the *Sporting Times* office an inexorable rule that at least one member of the staff shall be in the Forfeit List. For many years that place of honour was occupied by Shifter over an entrance fee at Alexandra Park for a horse which he had never seen, which was sold to him for nothing by a man that it didn't belong to, and which was actually stolen from the paddock whilst Shifter and I endeavoured to persuade a jockey to ride it on tick in the only race for which it ever went to a meeting. It delighted Master because, as he once declared when towering over another newspaper proprietor who had been boasting of his staff, "Why, confound you, I have more men on my staff in the Forfeit List than you have on all your paper, including your printers and advertisers!" But it was a heavy blow to Willie, who, having had a few heated words with the Old 'Un on money matters, had formed a firm resolve to clean up the Betting Ring and give Fleet Street a rest; but in all matters appertaining to the Turf, it is the thing that couldn't possibly happen which is continually taking place. And though poor little Bill has long since been released from all earthly contending and conniving, Master still hankers after a golden spittoon, or a platinum centre-piece, or a big epergne—something to be triumphantly shown to his visitors to excite the baser passions of the human heart, such as covetousness, envy, and the like; for such was the burden of our conversation on the road to Kempton on last Jubilee Stakes day. Then and there was poor Harry M'Calmont telling us all about the Hunt Cup which he won with Knight of the Thistle in '97—a huge and cumbersome solid silver equestrian statuette, full four feet high, of that overbearing Tudor virgin,

Elizabeth, on her way to put through their facings the half-starved soldiers of Leicester at Tilbury. And yet, so great was the charm of our Liz's personality, says the historian, that there was not one famished wretch in all that breadless, beerless horde (for they had neither a loaf nor a gallon amongst them) that didn't feel just as if he was about to get everything that was coming to him, barring his arrears of pay. For this statuette, which originally cost eighteen hundred sovereigns, Lord Coventry (at that time Master of the Buckhounds) paid a monkey under the hammer at Christie's, thinking what an excellent Ascot trophy it would make. But, when it was set up on the lawn, more than one owner eyed it askance. "If they ever got that into *my* little dining-room," observed the late Captain Machell drily, "the place would be so crowded that I should have to take my meals in the garden!"

And yet there have been owners who have clung to these baubles with truly feminine tenacity. Mons. Lefevre owned so many that he was afraid to sleep in the same house with them; Mr de la Rue, who won a thousand-guinea cup with Trayles, kept it packed away at his bankers' and had a plated duplicate to take its place on his dining-table; whilst Mr Jack Hammond more than once remarked, when pointing to the Gold Cup which rare old St Gatien won, now nearly eighteen years ago, that the privilege of keeping it to look at cost him, roughly, fifty pounds a year. But a beneficent Providence sees to it that Ascot Cups go only to those that can afford to hold them. During the past twenty-five years I do not recall a single instance of an owner of an Ascot Gold Cup being driven by hunger or other adverse circumstances

to carry his gaud to Messrs Attenborough's. It is well for the Turf that this is so. Personally I should hate to see any one of the last ten holders of this trophy emerge, famished and fainting, but still happy, from that little side-door in Chancery Lane, and turn hurriedly into Fleet Street to show a tankard of bitter how to take a joke, or to stay a pang within with the terrible sandwich of the tavern-bar dear to the heart of the pavement journalist as the 'boxing-glove.' I say most seriously that it wouldn't do. Fate sees that it would hurt racing; and doubtless that is the reason why the small, insignificant owner, to whom the attainment of success looks as easy as robbing a child's tin bank, soon awakens to the fact that the millennium is still painfully remote, and that an occasional victory only means holding over a trouble that is full of vigour.

Never in my experience did any individual stay longer in the game from sheer strenuous and continuous effort than the late Jesse Winfield. Starting out with nothing but his good health and strength, but being incurably inoculated with the get-a-monkey microbe, he raced and he made a book, owned horses of his own, and rode, trained, and dosed with bitterly wholesome but improving tonics the horses of others; he invented an embrocation, the fame of which survives him; but, alas! the knowledge of how to go inside when it rained was not in his possession, and poor Jesse died in indigence. When God gave out perseverance, He did so without regard to the recipients' tenure of other high commercial capabilities, which is the reason why many and many a struggler, now in the sere and yellow, is compelled, when he needs anything, to go to his relatives and try to borrow it.

But there was a time when Jesse was tilling certain little-known but richly fertile glebes in the shape of the minor racecourses of France and Spain. These countries had so long been breeding racers from their own broken-down selling-platers, that, to an Englishman who had a bit of useful bloodstock and his wits about him, it was like finding money to cross the Channel (and, on occasions, the Pyrenees as well) and come back with enough to endow an orphan asylum or hand out a few free libraries. To-day the game is not quite what it used to be. Our only certain way of taking advantage of the French at racing nowadays is to tunnel under them and catch them by the coat-tails ; whilst, as to the poor hidalgos, they are so impoverished by the late Yanko-Spanko unpleasantness as to be hardly worth the plucking. But the fat and greasy citizens of Belgium still appear to afford fair sport, and, according to the returns from Groenendaal and from Forest, from Boitsfort and even from old Brussels itself, they are getting it—largely 'in the neck,' be it added. For I do not suppose that anyone will claim that animals bearing such names as Tit Bits, Little Brown Mouse, Gretna Green, Kendal Grove, Hampton Wick, Daddy Long-legs, Billy Greet, and Welsher—all recent winners—are purely Belgian *cheveaux*.

Anyway, Jesse started for Barcelona one Monday, taking with him a brace of high-spirited animals that had only just failed to connect on the previous Saturday afternoon at Alexandra Park. They were what are ordinarily called pinchers, being quicker at pinching a bit at the fall of the flag than at any subsequent portion of the race; but they were quite good enough to sidestep anything that the leading

'nuts' of Barcelona could pull out. Nor did Jesse's calculations prove to be in the slightest degree at fault. The horse that had just missed in the Chalk Farm Cup simply cantered away with the Prix des Sardines, whilst the Harringay Plate disappointment took his bit between his teeth and galloped away with the big hurdle-race as though the winning-post had been right away at Valencia! In those two hours of victory at Barcelona Jesse Winfield increased in height by three inches. From wearing the look of dejection common to the small Cockney tradesman on Derby Day, when he deposits one week's takings on the top of the upturned umbrella and then picks up the wrong card, Jesse developed a sort of amiable truculence that called for everything within sight. As he stood there in the paddock, apparently waiting to see if anything else, not previously scheduled, was coming to him, and incidentally explaining to another Englishman the difference between the Spanish language as it is taught in our schools, and as, with twenty-seven different patois, corresponding to as many provinces, it is spoken in Spain, an emissary from Queen Isabella approached. Her Majesty, said this functionary—a lineal descendant of old Chris Columbus himself, proud as a conquerer's hymn and almost too excited to get his words out with distinctness—was coming along on foot from the royal balcony to offer her personal congratulations to the distinguished foreigner whose horses had swept the board of the principal prizes.

"You will be so good as to bare your head and remain bowing to receive Her Majesty," said this distinguished flunkey in a dialect too ragged to re-

produce, adding, "She will speak to you and present her royal hand. This you will raise to your lips and lightly kiss the fingers, at the same time assuring the Queen that the honour she does you is altogether unprecedented, also that it is entirely unmerited either by your miserable animals or your humble, ignoble self. Behold, señor, the Queen approaches!"

And before Jesse could digest these hints, the chamberlain had stepped aside and the Queen stood there, all smiles and condescension. Bless her kind and royal heart, how she did spread the butter, to be sure! As Jesse subsequently observed, "She laid on the cement till I felt quite sticky!" But he executed a long, bright smile, as one enamoured of some sweet consciousness, and even his spectacles sparkled with joy when the gracious regent brought her eulogium to a conclusion by declaring that the Winfield horses did far more than merely run: they positively *flew*.

"Oh, hedge a bit, y'r Majesty, hedge a bit!" cried the delighted Jesse, going, metaphorically, clean up in the air; and though the Queen-Mother nobly controlled her laughter, and, disengaging the royal paw that Jesse was still vigorously pump-handling, passed quietly on, it took Epsom's embrocationist several years to explain to his companions of that sunny afternoon exactly which of the twenty-seven patois he spoke to the Queen in.

An equally well-meant, but none the less terrible, *lapsus linguæ*, was that with which old Jack Dickinson, the Leeds tipster, whose business it was to sell you for a shilling a card whereon the potential winners of the day's races were indicated, menaced the Duke of Beaufort. It was on a certain glorious July day at Stockbridge, and the grand old Duke had alighted

from his brougham at a spot only a few feet away from where the husky, hard-working old horse-watcher harangued, in the dialect of the pit's mouth, an amused bucolic crowd. Dickinson was quite favourably known to most of the racing aristocracy, so that he raised his billycock respectfully as he saw the Duke approaching, and the Duke good-naturedly paused to listen. Old Jack, who had been up since daybreak and had seen all the morning gallops, was imploring the rustics to follow the blue-hooped jacket, which, he said, would certainly roll home in at least two races on that afternoon—on Travancore in the Mottisfont Stakes, and on Constance in the Johnstone Plate.

"And you really think that both will win, Dickinson?" asked the Duke, with graceful condescension.

"Aye, it's a pinch for t' pair of 'em, y'r Graace," roared Old Jack, with much warmth; "an' what's moo-re, if y'r Graace doesn't *pack oop a reglar parcel* over 'em, why—why, A'al *never* speak to y'r Graace on a racecoorse agin!"

Alas for the ducal packing-up of 'parcels!' Though Travancore just scrambled home, the beautiful Constance got beaten by a neck.

As a racing-centre Stockbridge practically departed this life at about the same time as did that 'elderly naval man,' Admiral Rous, but its demise was not officially recognised till many years later, whilst it enjoys a doubtful sort of immortality as one of the very hottest stamping grounds of 'the boys' of its time, many of whom 'worked' the meeting in the daytime and took in Salisbury or Winchester at night. One misguided genius there is still to be encountered in the West End, who, on 'the Hampshire circuit,' used to dress at night as a high-church curate, and as

such used to cover the presence of his confederates in the hotel billiard-rooms of the cathedral cities. Like so many of his kidney, he seemed to cheat only for the pleasure of squandering his plunder foolishly: he was like the beneficent honey-beetles of joyful Yucatan that distil honey on their shining, transparent little backs till they swell to the size of a glass marble; yet so susceptible to pleasantry and familiarity are they, that one has only to tickle them under the fore-shoulder for them to part with all their stock, and then go meekly off to fill up again.

Falling out with his ringleader early in one Stockbridge week, Joseph (as his front name was) incurred that peremptory bar to Church parade, a black eye. It was a most unusual circumstance, yet no noteworthy romance relieved the simplicity of the main fact. He had 'asked for' it, and he had got it. Even this mischance, however, did not deter his assumption of the sable vestments on that very evening, though the way in which he pulled his black felt hat down on the near side till it quite obscured his left eye was scarcely ecclesiastical. And Fate, for his deceit, ordained that Joseph should forthwith fall across a veritable young parson in the billiard-room of one of the leading hotels of Winchester, in which resort the band had already found more than one young squire who had been charged fifty or sixty sovereigns for his evening on the green cloth, and who had proved too much the gentleman to scream about it afterwards.

To engage this young priest in a modest 'hundred up' was to Joseph as easy as shelling peas, and far pleasanter; but to drink only ginger-beer, and to refrain from the obscene jests which can alone relieve the tedium of billiards with an absolute duffer, was

much more difficult. Joseph was constantly going to the very verge of what his warped sense of propriety told him he must not overstep, and then trying to drown his final words in a forced fit of coughing. Finally, and by consummate art, Joseph allowed the curate to beat him by three points; whereupon, he instantly claimed a return game, which the young gentleman could not very well refuse him. By this time the room was filling with local sportsmen, and, though the representatives of the cloth naturally made no wagers, Joseph's pals managed to get five or six bets of a level fiver on 'the one with the hat on.' It was when this second game had reached the exciting point of seventy-three all, that Joseph, who had removed his coat but not his hat, got a wee bit careless of his deportment. His opponent had pulled himself together and was playing really well, and it was becoming urgently advisable for Joseph to go ahead and finish the job in case of accidents. The gas above his head felt hot and his hat was sadly in the way. Faced by a somewhat difficult shot, he clean forgot his discoloured optic, and—pulled his hat off! For an instant his amazed opponent gazed aghast at the very unclerical spectacle; then, with undisguised concern, he asked politely:

"Dear me! wherever did you get that fearful mouse, brother?"

Then it was that poor, bothered Joseph, much more intent on winning the game than of keeping up his irksome disguise, blurted out:

"Straight out o' the ruddy trap, dear brother; right straight out o' the ruddy trap!"

'Tis true that Joseph won his heat by making a break of twenty-eight; but never was a billiard-room

cleared out quicker, and the gang themselves gave it out at Stockbridge on the following day that it would be no use taking billiard attractions to Winchester for a year or two, as the townspeople had just had some.

A true biographer should not hold theories nor express opinions, but on no single point have 'the boys' in my time, and speaking from observation, shown much more ingenuity than in their everlasting efforts to get into the rings and paddocks without going through the simple, if occasionally impossible, formality of forking out. Scaling barriers, stealing pass-checks, bribing lax gatekeepers, counterfeiting pass-checks—all these devices belong to the limbo of the past; but worthy of the D.S.O. (Piccadilly Circus division) were the three broken 'merchants,' who, spotting from the off-side of the racecourse a new custodian of the paddock entrance, instantly got through by shouting but a single word. On the off-chance of passing for detectives with a prisoner, two of them grabbed the third by the cuffs and collar of his coat, and, marching him sternly up to the point of ingress, shouted "Gate!" and—wide open the gateman flung the precious portal!

And "what did they do at Lingfield?"—as they have it in their own vernacular.

On this sweetly-rural and delightful racecourse they detected a weak position as promptly as if they had made their first survey from a military balloon. The oblong kitchen in which the Irish stew is brewed is ostensibly in the Paddock, but its service end overlaps into the Ring. When all that kitchen's batteries are in action the place is fairly hot, and, as a consequence, the doors are seldom quite closed.

From the Paddock, which abuts on the country road itself, the most amusing of the 'lads of London' once entered the kitchen on tiptoe, and, approaching a cook who was busily stirring some savoury stew in a huge cauldron, whispered hurriedly:

"Tell your mate I've took him six bob to four the one, an' ten bob to two the other; don't forget now, six bob to four an' ten bob——"

"Look 'ere!" cried the cook, angrily, pausing in his stirring and emphasising his words with his greasy right hand. "I'm too busy to bother about bettin'-messages for *anybody*: whatever you've got to tell 'im, tell 'im yerself!"

"All right, old man, don't hurt yourself!" sneered the dodger with a well-simulated air of injury. "All the same, he'd ha' done it for *you*, ye know." Saying which, he took his leave by—the service door into Tattersall's! Nor was the bitterly recriminatory argument which the two cooks subsequently held on the subject of 'neglectin' work to follow bettin',' pro and con, the least amusing part of the affair, for, when one is properly admonished by one's best friend, the admonition is seldom wanting in warmth or personalism. Wisely the Hindoos have no word for 'friend,' thus the little leather free-passes to the Hindoo music-halls admit only the editor.

But however amusing 'the boys' may be on paper, they are hot stuff to handle in the flesh, and, once upon a barren autumn time, they even made a meal of Chippy Norton, as the late Mr Henry Bull, of Birmingham, was passing well known. Twenty years have slipped away since *The World* chronicled the appearance in the Ring at Newmarket of "a person exactly resembling the familiar figure of John Bull

as drawn by Mr Tenniel in *Punch*, and this oddity in the sacred precincts of the Jockey Club loudly asserted his desire to lay four to one on the field in thousands." Chippy may have been new to *The World*, but he was fairly old to the Haymarket and Piccadilly Circus, and, whenever he was flush of coin, his stereotyped order to Sam Adams, then 'in front' at the London Pavilion, was:

"Now, Sam, me lad, get me the best seat in the 'ouse, an' put this here 'at and stick in the nex' best!"

I have some reason to remember Chippy, for he once, quite unwittingly, brought about my sudden withdrawal from the Stewards' Stand at the aristocratic little meeting at Croxton Park. My presence on the whitewashed scaffold aforesaid was, I should explain, due to the fact that I thought I had as much right to be there as either the Duke of Portland or Colonel Henry Forester, between whom I stood and watched the horses go down to the post. Presently Chippy came along and bowed politely and raised his broad-brimmed, squat beaver to us. The Duke only frowned at him, and the Colonel only stared in a bored way. Not affected in the least by this snubbing, Chippy roared out in a voice of thunder:

"Fower thousan' to one on the fee—ald, or any part of it! Now, y'r Grace?"

But His Grace did not bite, and the dear old Colonel only gazed round as though he would willingly summon the hangman. Meanwhile Mr Bull was waiting. In my right-hand breeches pocket a half-sovereign, the last that I had, was rapidly burning a hole through which to escape.

"Which do you bar, Mr Bull?" I asked, with a modesty almost exceeding that of the wayside violet.

"Albert Melville, me lord," answered Chippy; "an' fives bar Albert Melville."

"Forty bob to ten, if you please," I said, dragging forth my little ewe lamb and depositing it in his paw.

"Four to one to half a bar!" he roared to his clerk, "an' the number is six, three, two, nine, nought! An' thank you!"

Archer was riding Albert Melville, and Archer was in very high fettle just then, having under consideration nothing less important than an offer of marriage from the Duchess of Montrose—and The Tinman veritably believed that such a union would make him a Duke.

However, I had, as the Duke went down the stairs on one side and the Colonel the other, forebodings somehow that I shouldn't be standing there when my horse won, and my surmise proved perfectly correct. As the mighty shout of "They're off!" came welling up from the half-crown kennel, I was being politely, but firmly, removed; and it was on a far less imposing portion of the course that, when the "All right!" was shouted, I produced brief No. 63,290 and relieved old Chippy's breeches pocket of the weight of two and a half of the best. For, though Chippy's record was not one which would secure sepulture for his mortal remains in the Abbey at Westminster, he, in the parlance of the racecourse, never 'took a liberty' with *me*; what he may have done with others is no concern of mine. But to the story of his double martyrdom.

One of the things of beauty with which he was wont to adorn his ponderous person was a huge gold watch-cable. The regular racegoer was as familiar with the sight of that chain as he was with the red post on Newmarket's classic Heath; and, indeed, he saw it fifty times oftener. In point of weight it might have held the *Cedric* at her moorings, and what was its intrinsic value it makes me dizzy to estimate. But there came a day when a fresh 'head'—in reality, a conscienceless counterfeiter and sleight-of-hand sharp from Gloucester Street, Clerkenwell—came a-racing, and he and his pals soon got familiar with old Chippy. At the end of two or three weeks, and of one particular day's racing (at Derby, if memory serves), the little mob stood round the bookie at a refreshment bar, and whisky flowed like water. And presently the new boy, who had been openly admiring Chippy's lovely jewellery and decanter-stopper shirt-studs for several seconds, came out with the observation:

"Chippy, old man——"

"Mister Bull, *if* you please!" growled Chippy, who in his later years was very prone to check this sort of familiarity.

"Well, Mister Bull, then. D'ye know, I've just been thinkin' what a pooty little chain that is of yours, an' the only thing that sets me wonderin' is why you don't have it reproduced in *gold*? But I s'pose you wouldn't risk wearin' a *gold* chain on a racecourse?"

To say that Chippy was absolutely flabbergasted is to put the thing extremely mildly. For a few seconds speech quite failed him, and, even when he found it, it was not of a nature suited to reproduction. But, with

the racing man's first resource, he promptly offered to bet that it was a solid gold chain, and his offer was instantly accepted. Would he bet a hundred? Aye, or even a monkey! The other man, equally confident, said that nothing in life would suit him better than to risk his whole day's winnings on his little Clerkenwell opinion, and he had won a little over a thousand—they would 'call it a thousand,' anyway.

Chippy took it on.

Both parties staked. Then to the largest jeweller's in the Midland capital thronged the excited company, and, after some palaver as to the exact terms in which the question was to be put to the goldsmith, Chippy took off his watch-chain. The layer of the big bet temporarily grabbed and held the chain while raising an objection to the name of any particular metal being suggested to the jeweller—a fastidious bit of hyperprecision; but he held the chain for about three seconds—and then, his point being granted, passed the bauble across the counter. The jeweller fetched his acid, and, calmly and dispassionately, applied the test.

The chain was of common white metal, thinly gilded over!

Chippy's rage was positively picturesque in its magnitude and intensity. He raved about what the chain had cost him, and blared of the fate that should befall the wretched jeweller in Birmingham of whom he bought the thing, as soon as he should get back to New Street. He was going to run all the way from the railway station to the shop, and have the poor jeweller ripped up and hamstrung, before he could enquire what he had done to merit

evisceration. For all this blather, however, there was no way out of paying up over the lost bet, and so the shrewd punter received the two thousand. Chippy replaced the chain—which the winner asked to have 'one more look at' as it was given back—across his waistcoat, and the whole army of occupation then in Derby talked of nothing else all night.

It was on the very next night, after Chippy had had a snorting bad day, that another sharp, who only came racing occasionally, asked to be allowed to see the chain, and, having seen it, said:

"Not gold? Rats! These goldsmiths you've been to ought to be hoeing cabbages! It's snide, eh? Well, snide or not snide, Chippy, I shall give you fifty quid for it."

"Now, don't mess me about, me lad," snarled Chippy, "because I've—— Well, never mind, but I've 'ad enough of it. I've 'ad it tested an' it's brass, but the job isn't ended yet, an' don't you forget it!"

But the other was importunate. He didn't care a something or other, he said, for all the so-called jewellers in Derby. Market-gardeners they were, not jewellers at all. He'd been one of the first hundred men in the old Broken Hill camp, and lordlummy! if *he* didn't know gold when he saw it it was time he got out a broom and started sweeping crossings. And so he rattled on, turning out sentences that were softer than the south wind, with all the effrontery of that lamented sportsman who once calmly went through the Bankruptcy Court with liabilities of seventy thousand pounds and assets consisting of "an unsound chestnut mare and a disputed bet with, I believe, a welsher." Anyway, he'd bet a level hundred, he said, as he pulled out a roll of bank-

notes, that the chain *was* gold; and Chippy, with the weakness and the ineradicable love of chance, common to every people without exception, took the bet on.

Not to any one jeweller's did they go that night, but to twenty. And all were firm in the opinion that the chain was of pure gold, and of the highest carat. Five or six firms offered to buy it outright, if the gentleman wished to sell; but Chippy took his medicine like a little man. He paid out the eleventh hundred with the injured air of one who has acquired some great scientific truth late in life, and from that day to the end, the most skilful of 'the lads' allowed him to run loose, so that his sacred resolution never, in any future bets about the weight, length, strength, genuineness, or intrinsic value of his cable, to let it out of his own hands, even in passing it to a goldsmith, was a superfluous and a wasted one.

And yet some of these 'boys' have a weird and distorted sense of decency amongst themselves, and profess to shy at anything that is downright low.

"Speakin' about never stoopin' to anythink that's low," once said to me a Mr George Trussell, better known around Piccadilly Circus as 'Chops,' from his having once, in the heat of an unequal discussion, bundled an offending Haymarket grill-cook on to his own glowing gridiron, "give me Bob Sinclair to get money with every time, because Bob Sinclair can't abear, and never will descend to, anythink what you may call dirty. Bob is really what you might call a high-class sharp," continued Mr Trussell, "an' clever enough to charm fleas off a dog's ear; but he only travels with thoroughbreds, an' the ordinary meanness born in all mortals in *his* case died in the bud. I'll give ye an instance of it."

"Him an' me an' Cocoa Charlie got back from Gatwick last Tuesday night absolutely hearts-of-oak. We was that rapless that it wouldn't even run to a syndicated stave-off at Snow's, an' we looked like spendin' a dry, intellectual evening amongst the glossy elbows and baggy knees of genius-gone-astray at the German beer place; but Bob's marvellous intellect soared above it all. Resource? I reckon, if Bob was stripped stark naked an' tied to the North Pole to-night, he'd reappear in the Bodega within a week with a tumbler o' G.S.D. an' seltzer in his fist an' a monkey in his kick, what he'd torn off the bears a-teachin' 'em the scientific game of 'Uncle Sam'! But hows'm-ever, Bob didn't seem depressed a bit. 'There's no taste in nothink,' says he, 'an' that's all of the glorious flavour as we're likely to get unless we hunch up an' hustle for it. Come on over into the club.'

"Now, would ye believe it, we hadn't been in the club five minutes before Bob had taken the bank for ten pounds an' touched a almost perfec' stranger for a pony to open it with. When I say a perfec' stranger, that's hardly right; he was a well-dressed guy—though there was no real 'class' about him: you can always spot a bit o' 'class,' I think, by his linen, an' his boots, an' his 'at—that turned up in the club nearly every night an' never seemed at all short o' the red stuff. His name was Gunn."

I only shook my head. The name had no significance for me.

"Well, anyway, Bob starts chuckin' the broads out o' the box, with Charlie takin' in an' payin' out, an' me barrackin' up. Bob throws away a bit to start with, which serves the double trick of sweetenin' the punters an' givin' himself a second call on Gunn. An'

Gunn stood it like a lamb, too! May I die! he pulled out a second pony jest as though it was a-puttin' him on the Bank of England board at par! But no sooner has the second pony fell than Bob gets to work—an' what a treat it is to watch him! His style's so pretty, so finished; he deals out the cards like a duke in 'igh spirits. I declare, if I was a toff an' had got to go through it, I'd rather drop a few thousands to Bob Sinclair than I'd *get it* off of some o' the burglars an' messers that passes for workmen nowadays! However, you can guess what 'appens: in about a hour an' a half Charlie tips Bob the wink that the bundle's about big enough, an' the bank passes. Bob gets up from the table an' joins me an' Charlie in the 'Readin' Room'—they call it the 'readin' room,' I take it, because that's generally where the read-an'-writes comes off! 'How much have we got?' Bob asks of Cocoa Charlie. 'Two hundred an' fourteen, *gross*,' says Charlie, 'but, with the bloke's fifty took out, a hundred an' sixty-four.' Bob doesn't say anythink for a minute or two—seems to be communin' with himself; then he turns to me an' says: 'What *is* this yere Gunn, Chops? Do you know?' 'No better than you do,' says I, 'but I think he ought to draw his fifty *this* time. After what he's done he's worth keepin' sweet for another night, when he'll probably drop for almost any amount.' But Bob don't seem persuaded. 'Stop here while I make a few enquiries about him,' he says, an' goes back into the card-room.

"In less than five minutes," he continued, "Bob comes bustlin' back absolutely bristlin' with virtuous indignation. 'The dirty, despicable dog!' he cries, 'do you think that I'd have even *handled* his money

if I had have known it?' 'Known what?' I asks. 'Why, where he gets his money,' answers Bob; 'they tell me that the dirty hound gets his stuff by steerin' five or six of these here "massage" shops! Good lawd! to think that *I*, be what I may, should ever have staked on a deck o' broads the price of some pore milliner's or disappointed typewriter's shame! *Me* openin' a bank with quids, each one o' which was wet with a woman's tears; *me* workin' the broads an' stakin' with the "discipline-treatment" money! Oh, it's too repugnant, too revolting to dwell over; but this is where heaven deals out justice to him, this is where Nemesis overtakes him—— Cocoa, cut up that fifty along with the rest.'"

He is, however, not always ungrateful nor oblivious of bygone benefits, a very pretty instance of which I once witnessed amongst the coaches at Ascot On the box-seat of an admirable turn-out sat a certain beautiful creature who in that day was the despair of every purveyor of musical comedy in London, barring the one who was paying her six per week just to walk on and lend a tone to a burlesque in which three low comedians supported thirty choristers. Sweet things! they have more uses occasionally than even the gallery supposes, for once upon a time, when poor Hughie Drummond's finances were in a state which necessitated strict personal economy, his lady mother remonstrated with him on his continued extravagances, adding that his credit would certainly suffer from his being constantly seen gadding about at night with a Gaiety girl. "Kind, good soul!" answered Hughie, the tears of filial gratitude welling up in his eyes; "but let me tell you, dear mother, that your view is entirely wrong. It is because things

are so confoundedly rocky in the City that my credit would be gone if I were seen about at night *without* a Gaiety girl!" And a fond mother's heart beat all the quicker, no doubt, as she reflected on what a Chancellor of the Exchequer the nation had missed by her boy going into Capel Court! But I am digressing.

Across from the paddock, to join the giddy male butterflies who swarmed about the fair chorister and guffawed at her artless prattle, came a certain sporting nobleman, whose name I forbear mentioning, but will call Lord Charles. He was no longer young, though he affected the dandiness which calls for a waisted coat, white kid gloves in the daytime, and an enormous buttonhole of the beautiful carnation which Sally Slapcabbage alluded to as a 'malmaison cup-o'-tea.' From his hat to his heels he was ultra-exquisite, despite the fact that as an amateur boxer he held a record which scarcely assimilated with such lamentable femininity. His advent on the coach was hailed with delight by the fairy, since she wanted some betting done and none of her 'other johnnies' possessed a ring-ticket. She asked Sir Charles to tell her what to back, and he said Dieudonne.

"Oh, yes, I must have a bit on *that*!" she cried, "for the sake of dear old Ryder Street! Off you go, Charlie, and put me two sovereigns on Dieudonne; there's a bookie just behind us somewhere."

And from the crowd at the back of the coaches there came at that moment a monotonous blare of "'Underd to forty on th' fee—ald, 'underd to forty on the fee—ald, three to one b—ar one!" Lord Charles ran round to take the odds, and came face to face with Jim Billings, once a creditable middle-weight

pugilist from Shoreditch, but now a bookmaker of very doubtful methods. Jim, whose system was simplicity itself — reckoning whatever he took as 'winnings'—had a big mob of loafers and rustics round him, listening open-mouthed to his brave bluster and string-fastened offers; but his harangue stopped as he caught sight of Lord Charles, who had, obviously, intended to have a ready-money bet. And Lord Charles halted too. News of some of Jim Billings' recent performances had already gone round the town, and Lord Charles had seriously contemplated discontinuing the nod of patronage which he had accorded the pugilist since the old days of the Pelican. For the ex-scrapper and his clerk were daily 'ringing the book' on their customers by the old, old plan of recording the bets in a blank column and heading it, directly after the race, with the name of a losing horse.

Nor did Billings misinterpret Lord Charles' hesitancy. The eyes of fifty louts had witnessed the whole affair and now watched for the sequel. Billings, having realised that he must go through with it, also saw that he must communicate to his clerk the need for noting this particular bet with honest accuracy.

"Which 'orse, my lord?" asked Billings.

"I want five pounds to two, Dieudonne," replied Lord Charles.

"Right! Five pounds to two, Dieudonne!" cried Billings; and added, to the intense disgust of the noble customer, "An' put it down to '*Pal*'!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Captain Winnington Askew opens a betting account—And as promptly closes it—The dead hard luck of Flying Peggy—Golden words of Lord Durham's—The Crowner and the unfortunate juryman—Jimmy Henderson and the wily subaltern—Jimmy's appeal to the boy's colonel—'Tabasco, London'—Our changed halflings—When Shifter was a private tutor—His eight admirable maxims for the young—The cub who played Mr A. Roberts—For the International Championship at Spoof—How 'Captain Evergreen' played Fry, the younger, at billiards—Swears strikes a promising partner—And outlines a sawdust club—A memory of Ballantrae's Cambridgeshire, and—Man's ingratitude.

In a letter written early in last year to a creditable London bookmaker whose address is advertised daily in *The Sportsman*, a certain Captain Winnington Askew expressed his desire to open a betting account, mentioning as references the names of so many noblemen and gentlemen in the racing world, that he really seemed to be on close terms with the cream of the Jockey Club. The early days of January are not favourable to the making of enquiries of this sort; moreover, the letter itself was so devoid of the stilted, lamp-made phrases of the larcenous, and so redolent of the spontaneity of honest wagering, that the Captain received by return whatever sign, signal, or password this particular bookie may employ for 'Go ahead.' Instead of forthwith commencing to pull up Cockspur

Street by the roots, however, the Captain lay low until the morning of the 23rd (a circumstance which seemed to evince the Captain's integrity), when he wired to have a pony on Postman's Knock in the Sussex Selling Hurdle Race, at Lingfield; and was on. In due course thirteen horses ran for the race, but the 'good thing' was squarely beaten by Flying Peggy, to whom the Postman's Knock people instantly objected on the ground that she was ridden by an unqualified jockey, which unsportsmanlike objection the Lingfield stewards as promptly overruled.

But settling day brought no pony from Captain Winnington Askew, to whom, indeed, the bookie wrote three times for a settlement without receiving an answer. At the fourth letter, however, the Captain allowed himself to be drawn, and his unblushing reply was in this vein :—

"DEAR MR ——, No one regrets more keenly than I do the fact that our first little deal has ended disastrously to myself, but my sympathy with you, and my respect for your good father, compel me to tell you that it's no earthly good wasting any more postage-stamps or stationery in attempting to get a settlement with me. I had looked forward to a nice little run on your ledger, but Fate is dead against me, and it is only fair to acknowledge that my name is no more Winnington Askew than is your own, but I am extremely well known about the Haymarket district as—always very much at your service—

"BIG-HEADED BEN OF BEAK STREET."

The bookie was, of course, intensely angry with himself for twenty minutes for allowing such a wrong 'un to get into his ribs, but the evening newspapers of that self-same night brought a reckoning that was strangely odd, and one at which Captain Winnington Askew himself may have passed remarks which were more military than civil. The owner of Postman's

Knock, dissatisfied with the ruling of the Lingfield executive, had taken his case to the Stewards of the National Hunt, who, finding, after an unconscionable delay, that the jockey of Flying Peggy had once ridden in a pony race at a place, somewhere outside the pale of Christian toleration, called Roughton Feest, disqualified the winning mare and—gave the race to Postman's Knock!

Keeping what is weakly called for the purpose of evading the law a 'turf commission agency,' is most distinctly not all-beer-and-skittles, for, as Lord Durham observed in his speech before the House of Lords Committee about fifteen months ago—I am unable to give the exact date, since the very first bookmaker to whom I read the report as it appeared in the 'Special,' expressed a very natural desire to take the paper home and frame it, and I could not refuse him—"The welsher who runs away with money can be punished for theft, whereas the backer who repudiates his debt gets off scot free." And so it must continue until some sane human mind more complex than the rest frames a set of rules which are inflexible as—naturally, no rules can be. Didn't poor old George Hull, when he was a Crowner, make that sage discovery? I think so. His summoning officer had empannelled but a bare dozen, of whom the very first to be tendered the New Testament roundly declared that he couldn't think of sitting. "But you *must* sit, sir," cried the Crowner, long accustomed to shirkers. "Well, I *can't* sit," persisted the juror. "Then I shall commit you to prison," roared the Crowner, in a great passion. "Now, unless you instantly show me some good reason for your not sitting——" "Oh, *that* I'll soon do," retaliated that

ratepayer viciously, beginning to unbutton. "And if you don't call three blind boils on a fellow's——"; but, as at this point the only person in the room who wasn't giggling was the 'remains,' that physically disqualified juryman was hurriedly bundled out.

Only a little while ago, when an Act to secure the betting-house keeper a fairer deal seemed moderately likely, one Jimmie Henderson, who, in quite another name runs a sort of racing bucket-shop, debated with me the probabilities of such legislature, if any, being retrospective.

"For, if only it should be," said he, "strike me barmy if I wouldn't stand a supper for a dozen just to get square with a bit of a cavalry brat that put it on me for ten ponies, an' a perfect *parcel* besides, as long ago as las' June! I ain't so rich that I don't need any more red, nor so stony that I've lost hope of ever dealin' out flimsies like handbills again; but I *would* put up a gorge for the satisfaction of havin' a legal reckonin' with that young bud from Aldershot!

"He was a flowery bit of a boy in the 15th Dragoon Guards, partin' his hair an' his name in the middle, a Lieutenant Rawson-Tipton," continued Jim Henderson, with the wild humour and happy philosophy that lead an optimist to regard a mistake as an experience; "an', only to show you the value of caution, when he applied to me to open a ledger-account, I put the little runt through *three* enquiry offices, an' there wasn't so much as the *sign* of a mark against his name! He'd a family pedigree as long as a stud-bulldog's, an' when he wrote to me for a book o' rules an' a weekly account, he sent me a brace o' references that would have drawn wild birds out o' the ruddy trees!

"He took me two-an'-a-half hundred to one, Volodyovski for the Derby, an' up it rolls! Naturally I was anxious for him to go on an' knock this down a bit, but I knew he wasn't at Epsom, an' I wouldn't risk wiring to the barracks. Anyhow, as luck would have it, I fell across him in the Empire on the Thursday night, an' the sight of him was as sweet as the first whiff of wallflowers after a long winter. We went into the big bar together, him an' me, an' over a brace o' cocktails I tried to string him on to something for the Oaks, but it was no bottle. He said he positively *loathed* Epsom, an', but for the Derby itself, wouldn't care to own that he ever betted on anything that took place there. He wasn't going to Kempton on the Saturday either, so that, as he didn't play cards, an' I couldn't get him at the toss, it was a question of pulling out the brass on Monday, or losing the bird. Which did I do? Well, I don't care a dam what anybody says; if you'd ha' seen his references, you'd ha' done precisely as I did. He was going over to Paris for the Grong Pree, he said, an' comin' back for Ascot—he 'absolutely soaked himself in Ascot,' he told me—so I parted the cheque!

"Yes, I thought you'd stare at *that*," said Henderson, as he noticed the look of dismay which doubtless came over my features, just as if I had been suddenly stung. "However, eleven days went by without my hearing from him, but, on reachin' the office on the Monday in Ascot week, there's a wire from him from Paris, havin' a hundred each way on Saxon for the Grong Pree, an' a hundred on a thing called Lieutenant that got second in the first race—both on the previous day! I began to breathe again! I half expected to get his cheque on the Tuesday morning,

but I got a wire instead ; fifty each way, Champagne, for the Prince o' Wales Stakes, fifty each way Irena colt for the Coventry, an' fifty up an' down Clarehaven for the Stakes—all absolute bunce! Of course I didn't know at which hotel he might be stayin' in Paris, so I couldn't stop him ; an' on Wednesday he increased it to hundreds. He had a hundred each way each of three : Australian Star in the Hunt Cup, Slowburn in the Visitors, an' Sabrinetta in the Coronation—all of 'em Who's-Griffiths! On the Thursday I reckon he spotted one that was as good as bein' paid over—in Moscow! He had two-hundred-an'-fifty to win, Flyin' Lemur for the New Stakes—the first one that got hitched, absolutely! It was no he, thinks I, what he said in the Empire about positively *soakin'* himself in Ascot! Well, that closed his account for the week ; an' the more I looked at those references, the more I could see myself tearin' a little cheque for fourteen-an'-a-half hundred off him on the followin' Monday."

Once again he paused, seemingly to re-swallow an invisible door-knob which had risen in his throat. When he condescended to pick up the thread of his narrative again, he did so in a key which suggested that he now saw how much better it would have been, before drawing that cheque, to have gone down to the railway bridge at Charing Cross and let a train run over him.

"Did I touch that fourteen-an'-a-half? Not a ruddy oat!" he said. "On the followin' Saturday afternoon I took the rattler down to Aldershot, determined to have a clean-up with the monkey or lay the whole o' the facts before his commandin' officer. Drove up to the barracks an' got past the sentries, but—the bird had

flown! So-help-me-never if he hadn't (so a Tommy in a tin hat as I squared with a couple o' blow told me) left the barracks within five minutes o' gettin' my cheque, an' had taken a hotel barmaid along with him! Fancy takin' a barmaid—a bit of a *barmaid*—to a place that's full of it like Paris! Why, a penny abernethy at a Lord Mayor's Banquet is sane an' sensible to it! But it's a mighty black look-out for my fourteen-an'-a-half hundred, though there's just *one* chance: he's absent without leave—a deserter! On that ground, an' no other, there's just a possibility o' the dibs rollin' in after all. I pulled myself together, set my tosh on a bit straighter, an' sent my card up to the C.O."

"And did he see you?" I enquired.

"See me!" cried Henderson; "you mean did *I* see *him*? What ho! Telegraphic address: Tabasco, London! 'What do you want with my lieutenant, sir?' shouted the peppery little beast while he was still the length o' the stone passage from me; an', without givin' me an earthly to string him, he roared, 'I see by your card that you are a filthy advertising betting cad! It is you, and such scum of the earth as you, who have, by your nefarious an' fraudulent devices, drained this poor boy of his money, until, dunned to death, he has fled from his country and deserted his King, sir! It is you, you foul-mouthed, squalid, gambling horse-leech—("Gawdlummy!" interposed Henderson, "I really thought as he was goin' to set about me!")—who have pauperised an' exhausted this pure an' promisin' young lad until—until—dammit, I cannot control myself! Guard! Guard, I say! Conduct this squalid blackmailer to the gates an' kick him out, d'ye hear?' I said, 'You'll excuse

me, Colonel——' 'Obey your orders, men!' he shouts; an' I suddenly rumble as there's a tray of 'em—two privates an' a corporal—all got their hooks on me. 'Go on, hustle the beast out!' shouts the cocky little swine; an' it appeared to me that if I'd got anything to say about *my* side o' the case, I'd better get it out quick, so I yelled out, 'Look here! It's all dam fine for your young military duds to come a-bettin' on the nod an' playin' up the "pure boy" an' the "promisin' lad," but I'm jiggered if I can see where it comes in! I've never so much as seen the colour o' this young bastard's brass yet, while he—lordlovaduck!—he's played the hurried-touch on me an' taken a tart to Paris *with my stock-money*!'"

Leaving Mr Henderson with an adult and stainless elephant on his hands, I would casually observe that in nothing have we made greater advancement during the past quarter of a century than in the practical education of our young men. By gradually curbing the wild and rebellious dispositions of our schoolboys, and teaching them that Virtue itself is only one long struggle against the promptings of a vulgar nature, we now get, at the age of twenty, human hard-shelled cases that cannot be dented with a coke-hammer—brave young financiers and dealers, in whose veins flows the rich vital fluid of the school-farm turnip, and who can steam slap into the port without laying to for a pilot. Of whatever else the halfling of to-day may be short, he lacks no confidence in himself, although the picturesque assurance with which he will demonstrate his theories with a black-lead pencil on a restaurant tablecloth may not convince the beholder that he is allowed to do such things at home.

Long before the admirable Shifter entered upon

sporting journalism, he, by the way, took a private tutorship to an unlicked cub who was also a fatherless orphan. Laziness and ignorance were then the two most cherished characteristics of the average English boy; but as this particular youth had to be whittled into some sort of shape before being dumped into a position that had long been an heirloom, what great good fortune was it that sent Shifter across his path! The youth's widowed mother, greatly impressed by the polished manner of the new tutor, confided to him that, besides attending to her son's education, she wished to have the boy made practical; she wished him to be given some knowledge of the world, which, she was sorry to say, he sadly lacked; she wanted him to be able to hold his own in the battle and struggle of town life. And Shifter readily promised to put him up to every move on the board. Whether it was this harmless and ingenuous expression which implanted the seeds of distrust in the poor lady's mind is not known, but she attended at the keyhole the first lesson on practical knowledge, and these are a few of the pearls of wisdom which she heard:—

"Never dodge a tradesman to whom you owe money; on the contrary, go again, and if he is fool enough to cut up nasty, threaten him with bankruptcy proceedings.

"Never go into bankruptcy without plenty of assets—on paper. For a penny or three-halfpence a-piece you can always pick up on the Stock Exchange the five-pound shares of some worthless stock or other, so that for every fiver you throw away you will get an asset of about £3000, and if you can't make

your estate show thirty shillings in the pound at that rate you must be a congenital idiot.

"Never dodge a friend to whom you owe money; seize him by both hands and weep over his kindness: he will get so thoroughly heart-sick of you and your gratitude, that whenever he sees you coming he'll bolt as though he'd seen the devil!

"Never get really spoony on a Tart of any kind, especially on a light of burlesque whose liberal display of her nether limbs is supposed to render stage dialogue unnecessary. If you feel it coming over you, instantly fly to a fresh Tart as an antidote.

"Never take a small knock with a bookmaker; to owe one of them a tenner is as fatal as owing the lot ten thousand. Wait until you can bet with all the biggest across the rails of club enclosures, and then show 'em who's which. Meanwhile, keep punting in 'ready' on a very small scale.

"Never let yourself get shabby to look at: biggest mistake in the world! It is criminal for a starving man to steal a loaf, for the simple reason that if he were in a decent suit of clothes, which must be got somehow, he would be in a position to execute an 'option' on an amalgamation of bakeries. When you get into the world you will see for yourself that the best-dressed people are those who are always on the look-out—Jews and divorced women.

"Never listen to what your elder relatives say; they have probably been wrong 'uns when young, and, now that they can enjoy themselves no longer, hate to see you having a good time.

"Never be above counting your change; and always bear in mind what the country mother said to her daughter who was coming up to town to be

apprenticed to the Bond Street millinery: 'For heaven's sake be good; but, if you can't be good, be careful.'

"Never——"

But at this point the lesson was interrupted by a loud banging on the door, and, twenty minutes later, the new tutor was back at the railway station with his portmanteau labelled for London and a cheque for a quarter's salary in lieu of dismissal in his fist.

And what became of the cub whose town education so sorely needed perfecting? Why, ten or eleven years later, he was discovered at the old Adelphi Club, vainly endeavouring to beat Mr Arthur Roberts out of the International Championship at Spoof, before a breathless crowd of more than one hundred and fifty confirmed dipsomaniacs. And so indifferent a game did he play, that he could only 'tie' with the great comedian; the final scores being:—

Mr Roberts.		Mr ——.	
A French policeman sucking a peppermint conversation lozenge, inscribed "May I see you home?"	9	A ladder, *en rapport*, with a paint-pot hanging from the top rung	2
One new-made grave	1	A deaf chambermaid with a camel's-hair fringe	1
One new-laid planet	2	One speckled hen	1
A Shepherd's Bush postmaster with a dyed moustache	2	Six Mosaic wet rags	6
One hard-boiled egg, origin unknown	2	Two Dover's powders	2
		Four prairie oysters	4
Total	16	Total	16

Alas for the obstinacy and prejudice of parents! Yet another instance I might mention which arose at the Victoria Club in the winter of '86–'87. In the

annual billiard handicap, poor dear Arthur de Vere Smith was drawn against Fry, the younger, who had then only just begun to show his mastery of the game. Arthur had heard a great deal about the prowess of his opponent, nevertheless he took the odds about himself with considerable confidence. Shortly before the much-anticipated heat came on, he called aside Fry, the elder, and remarked quietly but impressively:

"If I'm to keep out of the workhouse between this and Lincoln, it's urgently necessary that I should win this heat. If that boy of yours beats me, therefore, I shall take him out to supper, introduce him to some of the hottest pastry on the music-hall stage, and never leave him night and day until I have finished his education."

It was noticed that there was an anxious conference between father and son, and Arthur, leading throughout, won somewhat easily.

There have been sons without number who have matured under the watchful guidance of the wisest and most excellent fathers; but in these days of excessive protective legislation for the young they may safely be left to ripen of their own accord like green bananas in a steamer's hold. Once upon a summer time, when the resourceful Swears was casting about to find a youthful, gold-lined aristocrat with whom to start a sawdust club in the coming winter, he—even he—steered up against one of these wolves in lambs' pelts.

He was a promising sort of youth in more ways than one, and a juvenile optimist to whom the whole world was a huge Garden of Armida; and Swears, wisely deciding to give the boy a good time before unfolding his very latest scheme for making a fortune,

metaphorically opened everything that came in sight. He carried the boy off coaching and did him right down well; he drove him to the races and made him win real money; when Sunday came he took him up the river, and even apologised because the steam launch only had one smokestack. If ever a chap worked hard to deserve another's gratitude, Swears did.

Eventually the flight of time brought round the day for taking a decisive step, and Swears, having arranged to show the youth the incomparable pitch which he had spotted, bade him come early to breakfast.

"I hope that you will like the neighbourhood, dear old thing," said Swears, who, mindful of the fact that no landscape can be picturesque with a handful of dead cabbage-leaves and an empty sardine-tin in the foreground, had sent round and had the whole street swept at daybreak. "But *do* have a mouthful of breakfast; that's a fresh syphon just behind you."

With that he drew the young 'un over to the window so as to avoid the dangerous possibility of the liftman overhearing, and whispered into his ear the name of the selected thoroughfare.

"Not a word to a living soul, mind," Swears imposed—just as he once bound down to secrecy the late Mr Smalpage of Maddox Street. "On your honour," he said, "on your honour as—er—as a tailor!"

As to the premises themselves, which Swears and his prospective partner then went to inspect, they were more than 'desirable'; and, though it would produce a panic in London to establish the principle that every house-agent who employs that overworked adjective is to be held strictly to his word, there was no misuse of the term in this instance. As the precious pair

went from floor to floor and from room to room, the *blasé*, critical youth made no attempt to conceal his satisfaction. The place was absolutely made for them.

"Now," said Swears, as he pulled from his pocket the draft plans on which he had spent so many midnight hours, "we'll just settle a few preliminaries and then smash a bottle of wine on the ceiling for luck. Now, those three little rooms at the top will be wanted for staff bedrooms; I notice in to-day's *Morning Post*, by the way, the advertisement of a kitchen-maid who has been 'two years in the scullery with Prince Louis of Battenberg': she ought to be secured, I think. The big room, just below, when fitted with a lift and all that sort of thing, will make an excellent kitchen. On the floor beneath that we can put at least two billiard-tables in the front room, while I've got an old oil-painting of the Marquis of Hastings which we can stick up in the back and call it the card-room. But this, of course, will be *the* room of the whole club, and the bar can go either over in that corner or along this wall here. What a room for a Sunday smoking-concert, eh? And we'll have ten or twelve little luncheon tables across the bottom there; for you may not realise, dear old chap, the potentiality of the shilling chop. I give you my word, old man, the shilling chop is the cornerstone of England's greatness. Success is made up of trifles; it isn't the man that keeps on asking his fellow-member for the salt, but the one who passes up the mustard without being asked, that gets put on to the good thing when it's running. Then there's the basement, which will be mainly gymnasium, a barber's shop, and lavatories. The water, by the way, has been cut off, but there's a hundred dozen of soda and seltzer coming in to-

morrow, and, generally speaking, my tradespeople are as good as gold. There, then, is the whole thing complete; now what about capital?"

"About what?" asked the youth, vaguely.

"Capital, working capital," repeated Swears.

"Oh, jigger working capital, you don't want any capital!" laughed the boy. "Why, hang it all, Swears, you might *lose* it!"

And this after a month's assiduous nursing! Blow, blow, thou winter wind; thou art not so unkind as man's ingratitude!

Which brings me to a memory of the night of Ballantrae's close Cambridgeshire. Aboard the 7.45, or last train for Liverpool Street, it was dark, and dull, and cheerless. Fain would I have squandered the two hours and a quarter in swinish slumber, for, after all, Newmarket is a toilsome pleasure; but it was not to be. When man was made mortal, it was ordained that he should err, frequently and readily; and I, day-dreaming as usual, had strayed into a compartment already more than occupied by two irredeemable backers-of-'orses, whom Providence deny me the happiness of meeting in the Great Beyond.

They were from the East End, smelling of stale whisky and cigars—bearing on the breastworks of their 'high-class D.B. reefer vests' the stains of the food that had fallen in transit—and they wrangled as only backers-of-'orses from the East can wrangle. Yet, as far as I could judge, it was not of bets or betting that they bickered. An oft-reiterated "No, I don't say as you wouldn't, but I've been done in the eye so often that at last I've made it a rule——," etc., from the gentleman who was sitting with his back to the engine, put it almost beyond the region of doubt

that he was stoutly declining to have his leg pulled by his friend on the opposite cushion, who obviously had not Ballantraed his boodle.

The fatuous folly of this incessant war against the satchels! Are not the monstrous odds against the backer sufficiently illustrated by so clear an object-lesson as the easy affluence of the bulk of his opponents? What but brains and an early perception of the way the game lay lifted Davis, 'the leviathan,' from the carpenter's bench, Reynolds from the cab rank, Steel from the fish-market, Head from the telegraph needle, and Alec Harris from the bake-house? And with what honest pride did the last-named tell me in his own drawing-room how it was through seeing his fellow-workmen—Jewish bakers, all of them—consistently doing in a portion of their weekly wages that he took to bookmaking, the first bet that he ever laid being five-and-sixpence to a copper—sixty-six pennies to one—against Disturbance for the Grand National of '73. Nine years afterwards he made a fifty-thousand pound book on Corrie Roy's Cesarewitch. As poor dear Charles Haddon Spurgeon observed, "If two pennies are put into a bag and shaken up, they will get together; he that hath shall have." Yet hope is never weeded out, but springs like grass tufts in a gravel path. Only a few hours before beginning this writing I was speaking to a very poor man, a cabman. He was out of work, and had just had his licence endorsed for 'saucing a rozzer,' he said; he had had to pawn his overcoat to get the money to bury his wife's mother; his own wife was at home without a bit of tea or a bundle of wood in the house, but expecting her ninth child; and his eldest son had just been 'pinched' for picking pockets

in Westminster Abbey. Nevertheless he was completely happy, for he told me he had got the biggest 'tribble event' for the following day ever known in racing—Glass Jug, good; all on Pitch Dark; any to come half-a-dollar up and down, Plum Picker. Of what use is it to try and reason with such people? None—nix absolutely. You might heap the coals of reprobative argument on that cabman's head till your scuttle was exhausted, but the first bootless wretch to come along with news of a Newmarket gallop to communicate, would own him body and soul!

Musing over these things, and pondering whether I should have a twopenny sausage roll from the train boy at Bishop's Stortford or save it for a glass of bitter at Liverpool Street, I must have fallen asleep, for my next remembrance is of our gliding into the terminal station and making with one accord for the refreshment buffet.

And the punter and his pal were there.

The latter still persisted in his importunities, but the hum of urgency that had previously characterised his appeal had now died down to a mere mercenary purr. He would, I should say, have accepted a cab fare with much gratitude, but his friend of the flinty heart was doing nothing. Again and again the needy one implored his obdurate chum to shake out at least a deuce of whites; but the result was never in doubt. Finally the worm turned.

"So this is the way you repay a turn is it, you dirty dog?" shouted the baffled borrower, now bent on showing up his mate. "It's no use for you to say as you ain't got none, 'cos I myself see yer take five fives, Galloway, off o' the Jarveys: yet ye refuse me a paltry brace o' blow! To 'ell with yer! An' to think

o' the turn as I done yer last winter, just acos I happened to be a bit flush o' brass!"

"What did you ever do for me?" sneered the tempted one. Meantime the crowd closed round, for 'dirty dog' is a fighting cue.

"What did I do for you?" echoed the taunter. "If ye want me to repeat it, then I will. D'ye remember the Christmas afore last, Jim Rook? an' d'ye remember the fact that Stepney Workus was full—chock full?"

Jim Rook flushed crimson, but did not answer.

"Chock full they was, an' turnin' of 'em away!" the tormentor bellowed. "An' what did I do to serve you, Jim Rook? Didn't I go an' take my old father out o' Stepney Workus purely an' simply in order that you could put yours in? Now then!"

It was irrefutable, incontrovertible; we could all see that. As Jim Rook turned to slink away, he drew a florin from his breeches pocket and flung it scurvily at his asperser's feet.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind; thou art not so unkind as man's ingratitude!

CHAPTER IX.

Of our brave defenders—Patsy the paralyser—And his breeches-pocket talisman—The blow that knocked out Sister—Patsy retrieves his past—Lockhart's-on-wheels afire—Baillie Guthrie—His consideration for a schoolfellow—A thirteen-round 'scrap' in St James's Park—Of Colonel North—And Eltham hospitality—Señor Don Smith—Of the *Cazadores de ponchos*—And Don Alvero Niculoso—Bring Electricity to Argentina—A triangular contract, and—A white cruiser—Backers who 'go for the gloves'—The Jubilee Juggins shoots in a pigeon match—For the benefit of Captain Crook—At the expense of Chippy Norton.

THERE can be no grander or more impressive sight to an Englishman, to whom a diminished trade and increased taxation have brought home all the true glories of war, than that of a scarlet coat fighting fearlessly till it falls, its wearer bathed in his own life's blood. Scores and scores of times, five-and-twenty years ago, have I walked for miles to gaze upon this beautiful spectacle, then generally to be seen at about two o'clock in the afternoon in the fourpenny-ale bar of a public-house that almost faced the Artillery Barracks in the City Road, E.C. The brave lads who fought were militia recruits equipped in scarlet serge, boots so new and full of natural oil that they literally bleated for blacking, and a thirst that amazed even the City Road. Their main object in taking the Queen's shilling was to become possessed

of a belt with which they could kill a police-constable, for every night they vowed that they were 'out for death,' and that they might come across it was the earnest prayer in which their families frequently joined. And so primed for battle were these lads, that, pending the arrangement of a match by the Foreign Office, they would daily proceed to lick one another into curvature of the spine before the eyes of admiring comrades standing at ease against the bar aforesaid.

One of the hottest of this military mob was a fellow called 'Patsy the paralyser,' in commemoration of his never failing to put his opponent to sleep. Being a cocksure contradictor, Patsy nearly always had a customer on hand; but his victories always were dishonestly gained. He was never without a penny-worth of chloroform in his breeches pocket, and, on seeing trouble surely coming to him, would leave his companions on some excuse for a moment, and quickly rub a little of the dense, limpid fluid on his short-cropped hair. Then, when the storm broke, Patsy would go in with his head down, and, confining his fists to his antagonist's ribs, would rub his nut well into the other fellow's mouth and nose, usually getting him so dazed and groggy that his defence became wild and weak, and to uppercut him or knock him out in any one of a dozen brilliant styles was as easy and pleasant as eating raw tripe—and that is 'Heaven enow' to the Omars of Shoreditch. Patsy would then condescend to drink with almost anybody, and would go off with whichever young woman in the crowd he fancied; while the loser, generally exhibiting a dainty *souvenir* of the evening, would give his views of how it happened, and explain, to the

delight of his intimates, the blow by which he would turn the tables at the next encounter. After all, it is the loser, not the winner, who earns the proud title of 'a rare plucked 'un,' and one who positively loves punishment. Yet Patsy's presence in the Army at all was a mere accident, since he had formerly been quite satisfied to sponge on his sister, who had kept a small greengrocery shop in St Giles's till a flinty-hearted landlord sold her up. In her prosperous days some kind friend had procured for her the contract to supply with vegetables an orphan training-school, and, with the profits derived from this bargain, she kept things at high-water mark for a while. But her inability to compete with men in the buying of her stocks caused her goods to fall below the standard imposed by the steward of the institution, and, after several remonstrances, she lost her charter. She had struggled on, tormenting her soul under the bane of rejected supplies, until she had received her *congé*, poor thing! over some sacks of Early Ne-Plus-Ultra red-skinned flourballs which she had fondly thought were the perfect pippins at fifty-seven shillings. Back from a profitless interview with the superintendent of the home, she had come and flung herself upon her bed, to give way to her black despair, wailing and sobbing as though her very heart would break. She had cried herself hideous by the time of her brother's return, and all that he could elicit from the ruined woman was:

"Undone! Undone! Undone! The G–g–gordon B–b–boy's taters ain't b–b–big enough!"

For fifteen long years I clean lost sight of Patsy; yet Fortune kindly placed me on the scene when the ex-militiaman got his first and only hiding. Fifteen

years had brought me into Fleet Street, and, for a short season, my duties ordained that I should walk home through the quiet and deserted streets at three in the morning, when the fairies have all gone indoors, and even the garrotters and the sandbaggers of Soho are indulging in the rest which we must all take sometimes. The self-same fifteen years had translated Patsy to the post of driver in a small auxiliary fire-brigade, consisting of one horse, three persons, a 'manual' of venerable pattern, four axes, three leathern fire-buckets, and three black-and-brass helmets—the whole located in a very small and evil-smelling stable down a narrow mews hard by my own abode. The brigade was supported by levies made on the foolishly charitable, until a vigorous and sustained attack in "London Day by Day," in *The Daily Telegraph*, dissuaded these from parting, and circumscribed, by starving out, the brigade's sphere of uselessness beyond the possibility of revival. But it fell, upon the very early morning of which I speak, that, just as a neighbouring tavern was closing its doors, and its customers, mostly intoxicated, were dribbling across the road to a small and cheerful coffee-stall on wheels, that the 'Lockhart's-on-rollers' itself caught fire, and soon its roof blazed up right merrily. Making hasty enquiry, two or three of the revellers soon found out that the peripatetic restaurateur had caused the conflagration by upsetting his paraffin urn-lamp, and he was vainly and angrily endeavouring to stamp out the flames, which were rapidly licking up the floor of his vehicle. Then somebody, more sober than the rest, remembered the dozing auxiliary brigade, and straightway rushed off to summon it. Anon Patsy and the proprietor's son came round. Taking

command of the situation, and without even consulting the coffee-stall man (who, with a gallon of raspberry jam and much broken earthenware underfoot, was loudly using language that was, if possible, more deplorable than the conflagration itself), they discussed which was the better course—to fetch the engine to the fire, or take the fire round to the engine! Could any but master-minds have debated such an alternative?

Ultimately it was decided to bring the raging holocaust under the range of the stable hydrant, and fourteen willing hands—my own amongst them—fell upon the heated coffee-stall, and, amidst ringing cheers of "All together!" and a woful upsetting and free distribution of hard-boiled eggs (laid at Woolwich Arsenal!), the machine was rattled over the stones to the mews and triumphantly drenched outside the stable door. And how Patsy, little scenting danger, did handle that hose! First the stream of water went straight into one corner, then straight into another; then, by a little tremolo movement of the right wrist, Patsy would throw a fluted or wibbly *jet d'eau* that sprayed outlying interstices. Never before had I realised the difference between skilled and unskilled labour at the base of a squirt!

As Patsy playfully trained his last cascade into the funnel of a glass lamp-chimney, and shouted to an unseen comrade to turn the water off, the coffee-stall man, who had been washing the raspberry jam off his highlows beneath the tap, came out of the stable and glared at his salvage stock. An expression of grief dominated his features for a few moments as he regarded the havoc wrought by fire and water, but as his gaze fell upon a certain circular and sponge-

like mass which lay in one corner, his sadness turned suddenly to rage.

"My gawd!" he gasped, and, twisting the hose out of Patsy's fists, he called upon that dexterous person with an oath to 'put 'em up.' Bang! bang! went his right and left into the face of Patsy, who, though not knowing what he fought for, still saw that he must hustle. There they stood, toe to toe and often knee to knee, and smashed away at one another, until a cracking punch, flush on the mouth, spread-eagled Patsy, leaving the coffee-stall keeper triumphant, but still infuriated.

"What for?" he echoed, when we interrogated him, "what for? Why, haven't you seen the needless damage what the unprintable expletive beast's been an' done, opposed to all reason an' common sense? Positively been an' played on the plum-cake till he's rewined it!"

But for expert amateur boxers no coterie that ever existed could show such a phalanx of punchers as the old Pelican, and by pretty common consent poor dear Baillie Guthrie (who fell in South Africa) was rightly regarded as a terror. With the magnanimity of the man who can take care of himself, he was the last to provoke a quarrel; but when the limits of even his patience and good-nature were exceeded, he cared not a jot whether he pitted himself against a boxing champion or a brace of coalheavers. His tactics, when his quarrel was with a man of his own social status—and, oddly enough, it was an old schoolfellow of his, Stiffy Smith, who was constantly taunting and provoking him—were ever governed by the most gentlemanly consideration, even by what some might consider excessive courteousness. For instance, at

the bar of the club one night, Stiffy elected to indulge in that indirect form of provocation which consists in saying loudly to one man the things you intend another to overhear. It was the more grievous to bear since Guthrie had a comparatively new chum with him, and finally it became quite intolerable. Nevertheless it remained for Baillie to begin the actual battle.

"Nothing but a tumbler of liquor slap between the eyes can meet that brute's last remark," said Baillie quietly to his companion; "but, as he is a decently bred 'un, he must have the best—the very best. George" (to the bar-tender), "put two liqueurs of the very old brandy—the three-shilling brandy—into a long tumbler, with a bottle of Schweppe off the ice. That is all, at present."

Then, having first paid six-and-sixpence for the exquisite peg, he took the tumbler in his right hand, stepped in front of the old schoolmate, and, bowing sardonically, said: "Stiffy, you have been asking for this for the last ten minutes. Take it!"

And swish went every drop of the contents of the long tumbler into the tormentor's face! Fight? Aye, naturally; indeed, it was a dull week with nothing doing when the sport-loving ratepayers of Denman Street, Piccadilly Circus, didn't witness from their front windows at least one punching match between Pelicans in the roadway, though, when the dispute was really serious, Swears' birds had a famous, if less handy, pitch at the bottom of the Duke of York's steps.

It was, indeed, beneath the shadow of the historic Column, on a dark and moonless night in April, that a hansom cab set down two tallish men attired in

evening dress. They were a certain doughty naval lieutenant, who had a bone to pick with Guthrie, and his second, the irascible Stiffy Smith. Bidding the cabman await their return, they descended the steps. Almost immediately a second hansom turned in from Pall Mall and deposited three more men in evening kit—Baillie Guthrie, Teddy Bayly, pressed into service as Guthrie's second, and Jerry O'Shea. As they also turned down the steps, a groaning four-wheeler came rumbling up, burdened with Fatty Coleman; and the six men entered the park. Along by the wall on the right, Stiffy and Bayly soon pitched on a convenient spot, and, with both men boiling to be at it, no time was wasted. Both were big men, both were scientific boxers, and both were fairly fit, so that, with enough bad blood between them to have accounted for murder, they made a splendid showing. For four rounds it was either man's fight; but, just as Jerry whispered, "Time, boys," for the fifth encounter, two police-constables appeared upon the scene.

"H'm! we could have done without you fellows," observed Bayly, as he slipped a bit of gold into the first policeman's fist; "still, as officers yourselves and men of honour, you won't mind these two gentlemen settling a little difference about a lady, will you?"—not that a petticoat had anything whatever to do with the quarrel.

"Oh, cert'nly not, sir," said the constable; "but if you wouldn't mind goin' along beyond Marlboro' House—say about half way between that an' Buckin'-ham Palace—you'd be off our ground, and—er——"

"And you'd probably like to see the finish of it yourselves?" observed Teddy, completing the sentence.

"Well—er—you'd be off *our* ground anyway," replied the constable, not willing to commit himself. "And, by the way, there's one other little matter."

"What's that?"

"You've got two hansoms and a fourwheeler waitin' for you?"

"Certainly."

"If you take 'em along with you, tell 'em to put their lamps out."

Beneath a lamp-post which stood about midway between the town residences of Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales, Fatty's fourwheeler drew up, and the upper half of Fatty himself protruded from the window. The darkened hansoms brought along the now well-blooded principals, and nine more desperate rounds were fought, the only transgressor against the customary silence being an excited cabman, who, apparently surprised at the absolute fairness of the fighting, kept on crying out to the naval gentleman: "Hit him in the wind, sir; hit him where he keeps his tea!"—just as the doubtless delightful Mrs Robert Fitzsimmons ever and anon encouraged her husband in his memorable battle with Mr Corbett, by calling to him: "Never mind his nut, Bob; hit the blanky tinker in the ribs!"

Compensations there may be for every misfortune, and, as Slavin once observed, even the man with two black eyes can gain additional pluck on reflecting that he cannot possibly get four; but, in the thirteenth round, the naval lieutenant, stepping on a kerbstone, sprained his ankle too badly to proceed, and was reluctantly compelled to give in.

Save for such meetings between friends as the one above, and in which one has the luck to be included

only by accident, fighting is every bit as dead as Diogenes; and even boxing is divested of so many of its brutalities, that no self-respecting gentleman can possibly sit out a modern ten-round contest without confessing that he feels most infernally bored. Too much money has killed fighting. It may be the invariable habit of all ages to lament that the manners of the existing generation show a falling-off from those of days gone by, but nothing to be seen in the boxing world to-day can be compared to the merry mills of fifteen years ago, when a stake donated by George Alexander Baird or Colonel John T. North was to be cut up.

And poor old North, what a royal rough diamond was he! And what a potent and alluring come-on to the inventor on the look-out for capital, the Queen Victoria Street promoter with the wild-cat scheme, the impecunious holder of the snide 'option' on a claim in Burmah on which rubies had been found in such quantities as to menace local agriculture! To waylay the Colonel was the chief care of many a busted genius who still perambulates the asphalt of Bucklersbury, 'rain or shine.' And when at last an invitation to dine on Sunday at Eltham had been gained—for, as the intelligent foreigner long since discovered, everything in England begins with a dinner—what a temporary Thebaw did the poor scheming wretch become! How little he imagined, as he made his way to Eltham in his hurrah clothes and his brain in such a whirl that he couldn't hear the traffic, that for all the chance he would get of a quiet five minutes with the Colonel, he might have climbed a tree in Hyde Park and stayed there. But so it was. The wily Colonel never coined his cherished aphorism,

"Luck is simply the faculty of seizing passing opportunities," with the least intention of himself furnishing the opportunities; and before that Sunday's gorgeous entertainment had run to any length, the man with the draft prospectus in his pocket would make the discovery that he was only one of five-and-twenty fellows who had come down on similar errands, and not one of whom, in the parlance of the pavements, had 'any earthly.'

Among the minor satellites in the train of the big comet, while it was still over the Argentine, was a certain wide-awake military sportsman who can always think of barrels of money and look pleasant, as say the photographers. I forbear mentioning his name. He may not have enough righteousness to qualify him for heaven, but he is pretty snug in the very best suite of rooms around St James's Square, and his custard-coloured phaeton is the envy of all Piccadilly. He has loved, and lived in, and even fought for, Argentina in several of her periodical dusts-up with Chili, and it is due only to the fact that one of her leading cities adopted electric-lighting that he is domiciled there no more. It was in this wise.

When North brought fortune to those parts, and the native magnates began to hoard big money as well as to import the wine of Cuidad Real for their own drinking, the need of many municipal reforms became glaringly apparent. One urgent necessity was the better lighting of the streets, and, with more wisdom than is usually to be found even in many European borough councils, a full and first-class installation of electric power was promptly voted for. Moreover, the venerable councillor whose particular perquisite the street-lighting was, was instructed to

hurry up tenders for the new light—a circumstance which more than suggested that somebody who had already greased the police had been sandbagged in error. Now this wise old hidalgo, whose white-violet modesty forbade his esteeming himself 'as great a thief as Cacua,' still yearned to trim his corporation properly, and to this end assistance from London, the centre of the civilised world, was highly desirable. He had not to look far for aid: my hero, Señor Don Smith, *ex-teniente-coronel* of the squadron of listed cut-throats, whose cold-weather depredations had won for them the merry nickname of *Cazadores de ponchos*—chasers of overcoats—was living in lavish luxury on the next block. Besides speaking the Spanish language as fluently as any Castilian, Smith was the most polished gentleman that ever lay awake at night and sighed for fresh commandments to break; so Smith was invited to dinner.

No matter what advice he gave; its effect was that during the next three months one of the most enterprising representatives of the great Broom Co., of New York, arrived and made a complete survey of that particular province of the Federal Republic, and wound up by handing to the old hidalgo a written offer to put in the electric light for the sum of two hundred and eighty thousand pounds. Then the real angling started.

Speaking through his friend Smith, the Señor, who professed to understand but little English, enquired how much of the two hundred and eighty thousand would be coming into *his* corner (just as though he had been an American boxing champion haggling over the division of the price of the cinematograph 'rights'); and the exquisite Smith, having translated

the enquiry and the answer it produced, replied, somewhat dejectedly, "Not a bean." With a disgusted grunt and a highly significant shrug of the shoulders, old Don Alvero Niculoso walked out of the room—the local way of intimating that, so far as he was concerned, the negotiations had terminated; but that, of course, was only to let Smith, with his smooth little argument, in. In a very few sentences Smith undeceived the New Yorker as to any preconceived ideas he might have held regarding the stolid integrity of the rulers of Argentina, whom, he said, had always, in the ignorance of their isolation, believed in standing in when the pay-roll was called. All the business-colleges in the land of the arid pampas, Mr Smith assured the electrician, taught that system and no other, so that if he (the Broom man) did not see his way to tender a duplicate contract in which at least seventy thousand pounds were put on for 'the old gentleman,' he might as well book his return passage to New York and regard his lost hours in the light of an educating experience. But the Yankee, though loath to lose the line, could not find it in his conscience to agree to that. Had such terms been proposed to his house before he left the States, he said, it would have been another matter entirely. As it was, he had based his calculations and fixed his price according to the lines laid down by his principals in New York, and, though he had certainly allowed a slight margin in case of miscalculations, such a stupendous alteration in the figures as was proposed was wholly beyond him.

"Then," said Smith, nobly sacrificing himself for the satisfaction of both sides, "I tell you what I'll do. You must not lose your journey, Don Niculoso must

not lose his little picking, and, most of all, the city must not lose its light. *I* will accept your estimate for two hundred and eighty thousand pounds, tendering one of my own—for what sum does not concern you—to the council. It is certain to go through—old Don Niculoso will see to that—and when the work is done and the lamps are alight, I shall be only too delighted to hand you your money, for, as you may very reasonably suppose, I shall put on a little bit for my own good offices in the matter. So come and breakfast with me to-morrow morning and bring your contract to me for signature. And, by the way, I may as well pay you five thousand on account, by way of deposit."

Few sorrier bargains have been struck since Eve swapped Paradise for a pinafore; but the deal was carried through—or very nearly so. Within twelve months the city had its electric lamps in every thoroughfare, and mighty fine they looked. Don Niculoso doubtless got his seventy thousand, if not considerably more, for he purchased a country property near Rosario, and retired to it. But all that the American electrician could hear of Señor Don Smith on the day after the city's exchequer disbursed its 'big gas-bill,' was that he had gone aboard a big white cruiser which had been lying in the estuary of the rare old Plate for some days, and which, on receiving him, got up her anchor and steamed away northwards towards Monte Video.

In the *haute finance* the laurels noticeably go less frequently to the free and lavish disburser than to the adroit collector, silent in the possession of secret virtues of which he never was suspected. Only a little while ago an admired and valued brother-brush

of mine confided to me his scheme for starting yet another society and dramatic sixpenny journal, and he incidentally mentioned that he had a capital of no less than three hundred pounds with which he proposed to entertain his contributors to lunch and keep himself in cigarettes. "But three hundred will not suffice for your first printers' bill!" I cried. My comrade looked at me in scorn and amused despair. "My dear Arthur," he said, in a tone that lamented our previous counsels, "you are an absolute baby in these matters. On principle, I *never* pay printers!"

Nor, when the latter-day professional backer of horses gets into a hole, does he pay bookmakers. At the end of his bad time he goes for the gloves with his mind fully made up to win back his losses or take the knock in good style. It may not be a very honourable proceeding, but the wisdom of it is beyond dispute. To 'settle' would be to dissipate in one day the little nest-egg which would, by the practice of certain small economies, such as knocking off the three-shilling cigars and making it a rule to shave himself, last its posssesor to the end of his days. And at such times as there is a stable tip amongst the select that any particular plunger has got to 'go out,' can't his final struggles be utilised by the blue-blooded sharp! In my mind's eye I have the *coup* effected upon poor old Chippy Norton by a certain polished hunt-meeting journeyman-steward of the type stigmatised by the late Mr Fred Swindells in his deathless aphorism, "A thief is a thief, but a *heducated* thief is a proper (——) thief!" Such a one was the person to whom, out of respect for the costly and altogether one-sided law of libel, I will allude to as Captain

Crook. His real surname was nothing like Crook, but it ought to have been; and, though I have not seen much of him of late, he was very full of running about the time that Benzon, the poor 'Jubilee Juggins,' blossomed out like the butterfly that was 'christened in a teapot and died in an hour.'

Captain Crook's natural bent for going on the cross was rendered all the more vicious by the fact that he was not by any means a needy man, and he moreover held a ruling position in many sporting bodies. He was the inventor of the justly-celebrated 'wipe trick,' which was a valuable asset to him until it became known and shamefully imitated. If he won a selling race with a horse which he was reluctant to part with, he always had a handkerchief smothered with blood in his pocket, and this he ever and anon applied to the animal's nostrils as he led it into the sale-ring. Intending buyers, jumping at the conclusion that it was a case of broken blood-vessels, fought shy, which made a wonderful difference to the figure at which Crook subsequently bought his nag in. He 'bested' out of his sheer love of besting, and always with a proper consciousness of the fact that his social standing was sufficiently high to bluff ninety-nine out of any hundred of his possible accusers.

There was some pigeon-shooting one day at a certain aristocratic resort where that branch of the sport forms the chief attraction, and Crook had found out, with the intuition which is the blood of life itself of the successful sharp, that Benzon was expected, not only as a bettor, but as a competitor as well. The Captain chanced to be leaning idly against a post very near the entrance gate, when a hansom, bringing the

quarry aforesaid, and an outfit of artillery scarcely less formidable than that of Daudet's immortal Tartarin, clattered up. Poor old plunger! Who that gazed upon him then in all his Solomonic glory could ever have imagined that, within an incredibly short period, one hundred and forty-four of his wonderful linen collars would be knocked down by the auctioneer to an old clo' dealer, an exile from the Levant, at a sale forced by a creditorial horde, for a paltry eight bob!

On the racecourse and at the traps one reverses the old copy-book adage: The man is known by the company that he *doesn't* keep. So Benzon, with an invaluable servant at his heels—(Did you ever hear, or, having heard, do you remember, what poor Fred Russell said of his admirable manservant? "He's slow, he's not particularly sure, and not uncomfortably honest," he said; "but he sleeps with a corkscrew chained round his neck, and it's my belief he could get you a cheque cashed in the Desert of Sahara!")—bearing his arms and ammunition, passed by Crook without even a nod of recognition, though he doubtless knew the Captain by repute. Crook was not so insensible of the young 'un's presence, for hardly had the Plunger entered the luncheon room to steady his nerves with a pint bottle, than the busy bester betook himself to a spot on the grass-edge where several well-known bookies hung about and waited for the sport to commence. Chippy Norton was there, and Crook immediately singled him out.

"Look here, Bull," said the Captain, "young Benzon's just arrived and is going to shoot here to-day. I don't know what sized book you're making, but whatever Benzon wants, you lay it him—anything

in reason, of course—and I'll go halves in the book. See?"

There was nothing particularly out of the way in the proposition, and even if there had been, the brawny Birmingham bookie would have thought twice before refusing, for Crook was a member of the committee, and, therefore, an awkward man to offend. It was probably well within his power to put the bar up against any bookmaker that he did not fancy, and that, too, without much consultation with his brethren, many of whom were not above suspicion, though all were cocky enough when on their own muckhill. So Chippy put a good face on it, and growled a perfunctory:

"All right; halves in the book."

Never did Benzon shoot more wildly than he did on that day, though he backed his gun heavily at every shot. The Captain, posted conveniently behind the competitors and in direct line of view with the bookie, constantly grimaced at the latter, who, taking the cue, extended the ordinary six-to-five's to thirty-to-a-pony's on very slight provocation.

Finally the afternoon came to an end; the last trap was pulled, the last little blue-grey bird took his leaden medicine and turned the inevitable somersault in mid-air amid a scattering shower of his own blood-spattered feathers, and the company began to disperse. The Plunger was off in the first flight, with characteristic impetuosity to go and lose another 'parcel' at some other diversion; but Crook waited behind and presently buttonholed old Chippy.

"Well, Bull, how much have you won off Benzon?"

"About three hundred an' sixty, I think," responded the bookie. Then he shouted out to his clerk, who

was a few paces away, "Here, Jim, don't go messin' about in that bar till I've done with yer, my lad; just see what we've won off the Jewbilly?"

"*I* make it three hundred and *eighty*," put in Crook, with no attempt to conceal the fact that he had been keeping a record of the Plunger's bets on the back of a county-court summons.

"Three hundred an' eighty's quite right, sir," asserted the clerk, after consulting the book.

"Then you have to give me a hundred and ninety," said Crook, turning to Chippy and holding out his palm.

But the bookie didn't see it in that light. Surely, he argued, it would be time enough to settle up after *he* got paid; as soon as ever Benzon's cheque turned up on Monday, the Captain should receive his 'corner.' That, however, didn't satisfy Crook. He was descended, he said ironically, from the old feudal Barons, whose first, and indeed only, article of faith was to take it in cash, and he didn't propose to be put off. Unless he received his hundred and ninety, spot cash, Henry Bull of Birmingham need never present himself at the entrance gates of *that* place again—nor, indeed, at either of the race-meetings taking place in the coming week, for he (Crook) would take damned good care to put the case in a proper light before his brother stewards, and there were very few ruling bodies that he couldn't 'get at,' in the least pleasant sense of the term.

Metaphorically at the point of the sword, Chippy pulled out the hundred and ninety and handed it over, and—well, to be neither precipitate nor prosy, that closed the whole incident, for the Plunger's accounts were missing on the following Monday and are still

unsettled. There were times when Chippy seemed to think that Crook must have had something more than a mere presentiment of the approaching slump; but, in dealing with gentlemen of the deepest dye, it does not always pay to squeal, even when one's tail is shut in the door.

CHAPTER X.

The ashes from which the Pelican rose—Lord Queensberry is solaced—The real bread and cheese in *The Pointsman*—Appeasing the Grumbler—The after-hours' pothouse—Willie Wilde—Describes his journalistic life—And writes a leader on the anniversary of the penny postage stamp—How Alfred Cellier changed a little cheque—Mourning wreaths and log-rolling—The Old Castilian on useful names—Bobbie Ashton makes a 'Royal Blue' conquest—The models at Jeanne Sylvain's—An agreement for a partnership—Ashton's duplicity—The weekly remissions—Some of Sylvain's customers—The beautiful Mrs Saintsbury—Kittie goes to Teddy Solomon's Ball—Of that ever-memorable shivoo—And those that took part in it—A sudden dissolution of partnership.

COMING downstairs to his breakfast one morning in December 1885, John Sholto, eighth Marquis of Queensberry, found upon his table two communications between which some sort of affinity existed. The first was a *précis* from the Lord Chancellor, officially informing him that he would not be allowed to sit in the House of Lords as a representative peer for Scotland; the second was a round robin from a dozen of the cheeriest souls in the Bohemia of those days, bidding 'Q' (as his intimates all called him) be of good cheer nor cast down or sad at heart over the Chancellor's ruling (of which all London had heard), since he had that day been elected a member of the Spooferies. "And when it comes to comparing

the Spooferies with the House of Lords," the missive concluded, "it is a million to one on the Spooferies."

The other name of the Spooferies was the Adelphi Club, and at the time of its discovery by Arthur Roberts and the Shifter it was an obscure resort of a semi-sporting and dramatic character, run by a very decent fellow named Tom Bell, it having previously been a gymnasium (it was, roughly speaking, only one big room with a couple of billiard-tables in it), and, later still, a practice room of the band of the Corps of Commissionaires located hard by. Shifter being afflicted with a crapulous hunger for plain food late at night—(It was about this time, or a little later, that our erstwhile comrade, Cecil Raleigh, produced *The Pointsman* at the Olympic, for I went with Willie to the first performance. We had dined somewhat lightly, and I was therefore apprehensive of trouble when, in the second act, one of the actors devoured large quantities of real bread and cheese. It was visibly such nice crusty bread and such wholesome cheese that poor Willie could not conceal his rage and disappointment. As the actor gorged on, Shifter, unable to bear it any longer, called out, quite unconsciously, "Look here, if you have onions as well, I shall hiss")—fell an easy prey to the excellent tripe-and-onions and buck rarebits of the Spoofs. And so it fell that Roberts coming on nightly from the Avenue, and Willie being always in Romano's at chucking-out time, the pair were usually requested by some dozen of the lads in white ties to "take us into your pot-house for an hour." This thing grew until, weary of paying other people's supper bills, the twain hit on the brilliant expedient of putting down each and

sundry, duly proposed and seconded, as members. Full three years before the stillborn Star Club in Denman Street laid the foundation of the immortal Pelican, all the male notables in London flocked to the Spooferies in Maiden Lane.

There were some strange encounters between the old material and the new in those changing times, for the government clerks who considered themselves journalists because they wrote dramatic criticisms, and the sere and yellow histrions, failed to assimilate with the invaders. They were willing to join in the current spelling-bee, but they were properly horrified when one noble sportsman, who had promptly added 'M' to their 'A' and 'B,' roared out, on being challenged, "They're my initials; and may I ask if either of you chaps have ever served writs, as you seem to know my name rather better than I do myself!" *En revanche*, two of the aggressors tried to settle down to pass the afternoon with a chess-board, but, after reciprocally advising one another in strident tones for ten minutes, were openly remonstrated with by a domiciled greybeard for crying out in the hearing of the hitherto uncorrupted barmaid, "Check the king, you owl! check the king; then your bishop and your queen can have a knight out!" The keystone of the invasion was put on when a certain good fellow, called by common consent the Grumbler, was elected, for, being more than merely useful with the cue, he forthwith took possession of the easiest billiard-table, and, though free from guile in the ordinary way, could pull a very rapid game out of his boots if his opponent would bet him a dollar. As the last of the mugs remarked as he handed over his five shillings, "With half a quid on

the game I should think you would be about up to Cook's form!"

The untimely death of poor Bell, just as he was beginning to reap his harvest, let in as joint proprietors Didcott, the agent, and George Fredericks, ex-proprietor of the Bedford Music Hall; but the club was too full of running to be affected by any managerial changes, and must have been as good as a gold mine, despite the artistic assumption of astonishment on the part of the new caterers at the amplitude of the eighteenpenny lunch. Excellent curried fresh mutton and rice was, I remember, the first *plat du jour* of the new firm, and when the irrepressible Grumbler had wolfed about five plates of it for his eighteenpence, and Didcott and Fredericks were contemplating speedy ruin, he was discovered to be in tears.

"What's the matter?" asked the proprietors, in chorus.

"Why, that curry."

"Well, you seemed to like it."

"That's just it. If I'd known it was going to be so damned good, I'd have had another gin and bitters!"

At that very moment an alert page boy came up to the managerial novices with, "A gent over by the door wants the complaint book at once, gentlemen." And it turned out to be Fred Russell, who, in breakfasting on tinned tongue, had trodden heavily with his dickiest tooth on a round bit of solder that had dropped through.

"This will probably mean a visit to Bow Street for you johnnies," he growled, "but the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals will look after that."

"Why, what's the matter?" cried the anxious partners.

"Matter? Good gad, sirs, do you call yourselves sportsmen? Why, you've shot this poor cow in the tongue!"

Barring the two worthy Hebrews who shared the proprietorial profits, and the five or six waiters who divided the tips which, in defiance of all club laws, they extended the hand for, nobody at the Spooferies made the egregious mistake of taking life seriously. It being a matter of social rigour for a gentleman to identify himself with a club of some sort, it suited most admirably the youthful and aged sages of that era to spend the hours during which the dawn is chasing away the shadows of mirk in devouring much tripe-and-onions, and malt ale, and punch, and mixing with the brightest men in town. The best wit needs lamplight, and no gentler humorist or more polished gentleman ever entertained the thoughtless patrons of the Spoofs—the gilt-edged fellows who dropped in to kill time with a buck rarebit, but eventually stayed on to spend a delightful evening—night after night than poor Willie Wilde. The personification of good nature and irresponsibility, Willie with ten thousand a year would have been magnificent; without other income, however, than that which his too indolent pen afforded, the poor fellow was frequently in straits which must have proved highly repugnant to his really frank and sunny disposition. No doubt his artistic inactivity was to some extent inherited, for, in her brilliant if somewhat uncharitable memoirs, the gifted Henrietta Corkran says: "Lady Wilde used to sit in a shaded room lit by soft-hued lamps in broad daylight. Her long, massive, handsome face was plastered with

white powder; over her blue-black, glossy hair was a gilt crown of laurels. Her throat was bare; so were her arms, but they were covered with quaint jewellery. On her broad chest were fastened a series of large miniature brooches, evidently family portraits, which came down almost as low as the gastronomical region. This gave her the appearance of a walking family mausoleum. She wore white kid gloves, held a scent-bottle, a lace handkerchief, and a fan. Lady Wilde reminded me of a tragedy queen at a suburban theatre."

Yet Willie loved (to talk of) his work, and would charm the ears of the uninitiated with such soft south wind as, "The journalistic life irksome? Dear me, not at all! Take my daily life as an example. I report at the office, let us say, at twelve o'clock. To the editor I say, 'Good-morning, my dear Le Sage,' and he replies, 'Good-morning, my dear Wilde. Have you an idea to-day?' 'Oh yes, sir, indeed I have,' I respond. 'It is the anniversary of the penny postage stamp.' 'That is a delightful subject for a leader,' cries my editor, beaming on me; 'and would you be good enough, my dear Wilde, to write us a leader, then, on the anniversary of the penny postage stamp?' 'Indeed I will that, with pleasure,' is my answer. 'Ah, thank you, my dear boy,' cries my editor, 'and be sure to have your copy in early—the earlier the better.' That is his final injunction, and I bow myself out. I may then eat a few oysters and drink half a bottle of Chablis at Sweeting's, or, alternatively, partake of a light lunch at this admirable club, for, as rare Ben Jonson says, 'The first speech in my *Cataline*, spoken by Sylla's ghost, was writ after I parted with my friends at the Devil Tavern; I had

drank well, and had brave notions.' I then stroll towards the Park. I bow to the fashionables. I am seen along incomparable Piccadilly. It is grand. But meantime I am thinking only of that penny postage stamp. I try to recall all I ever heard about postage stamps. Let me see: there is Mr So-and-so, the inventor; there is the early opposition; the first postal legislation; then the way stamps are made; putting the holes in the paper; the gum on the back; the printing—all these details come back to me; then a paragraph or two about present postal laws; a few examples of the crude drolleries of the official Postal Guide; perhaps, as a conclusion, something about the crying need of cheaper letter rates. I think of all these circumstances as I stroll back along Pall Mall. I might go to the British Museum and grub up a lot of musty facts, but that would be unworthy of a great leader writer, you may well understand that. And then comes the writing. Ah, here is where I earn my money. I repair to my club. I order out my ink and paper. I go to my room. I close the door. I am undisturbed for an hour. My pen moves. Ideas flow. The leader on the penny postage stamp is being evolved. Three great, meaty, solid paragraphs, each one-third of a column—that is the consummation to be wished. My ideas flow fast and free. Suddenly someone knocks at the door. Two hours have fled. How time goes! It is an old friend. We are to eat a little dinner at the Café Royal and drop into the Alhambra for the new ballet. I touch the button: my messenger appears. The leader is despatched to 141 Fleet Street, in the Parish of St Bride, and off we go, arm in arm. After the shower the sunshine. Now for the enjoyment of that paradise of cigar-ashes,

bottles, corks, ballet, and those countless circumstances of gaiety and relaxation, known only to those who are indwellers in the magic circles of London's literary Bohemia. Is it not delightful, boys?" And the boys would reply, "It is superb!"

But appreciative audiences do not satisfy creditors, and some of Willie's methods of raising the wind were peculiarly reflective of his great genius. There was one dull week-end night when, as three or four of us sat laboriously doing nothing, there walked into the club the late lamented Alfred Cellier. He was going out of town, it seemed, and, as often happens (so I am told) to the man conscious of the fact that he has his cheque-book in his pocket, he had run clean out of ready money. And the bar-tender, to whom Cellier disclosed the fact, could afford him no relief since there wasn't enough just then in the till to have cashed anything beyond a dollar postal order. It was then that Alfred turned round, and, addressing us impersonally, asked:

"Can any of you boys change a small cheque for me?"

For an instant there was no response; then Willie Wilde awoke with a start, and, in a manner of speaking, caused us to stop growing, by enquiring:

"For how much, my dear Alfred?"

"Only a couple of sovereigns," Cellier answered.

"Tut, tut, dear lad, *two* are no good to you," rejoined Wilde, largely, as a benevolent smile overspread his features. "Make it *five* and I'll do it with a very great deal of pleasure."

This was a corker! We could only watch what followed in silent awe. Cellier, having written out a cheque for five pounds, handed it to Wilde, who

promptly drew from the watch pocket of his capacious waistcoat five veritable sovereigns and handed them to the famous man of music. We were all dumbfounded, positively. For my own part, I felt convinced that such an utterly unprecedented occurrence could only be the prelude to something much more novel and startling, and, ten or fifteen minutes later, my surmise proved to be correct.

Having swallowed a second whisky and soda and purchased enough cigarettes to fill his case, Cellier turned to bid us good-night. "Good-night, and a good time to you, old chap!" cried Wilde, and—almost immediately arose from his chair. After the disappearing friend he went and overtook him on the very threshold of the door.

"Half a moment, my dear Alfred, you—er—you ——"

"What is it, old man?"

"You said just now that you only wanted *two* sovereigns, didn't you?"

"I did, and two would have done me very well," assented Cellier.

"Quite so. Well—er—the fact is that the sovereigns which I have just given you are the property of a friend, to whom, however, your cheque will be equally agreeable. But *personally* I am absolutely stony until Saturday, when I have several sums to receive. Now, would you, as you say two pounds are sufficient for your own needs, grant me the loan of—*the other three*?"

And Cellier, being a gentle, simple soul in financial matters, forked out!

Next to a certain fellow-journalist, who, when his wife, a brilliant young actress, died, went to a leading

firm of West End florists, and said, "I want the handsomest wreath that you have, to deposit on the coffin of my poor dear wife,"—and when the magnificent offering of arum lilies and tuberoses and camellias was made up, the sad voice of the mourning widower, half choked with sobs, bleated, "Look here, let me have this for nothing. I do the account of the funeral for five of the leading daily papers, and you shall have a puff that's worth a tenner to you!"—next to this sympathetic chap, I repeat, there were few more considerate spendthrifts than Bobbie Ashton. I admit, with regret, that this name is a fictitious one, since Bobbie's actual appellation is too valuable an asset to be ruthlessly exposed. It is a cognomen of distinct commercial value: as Captain Jones, the dear, impecunious 'Old Castilian,' once observed as he read the list of the members of the Jockey Club outside the weighing-room at Epsom, "Holy bones! there are a lot of names there that would look dashed well on the back of a bill-stamp!" But though Bobbie and his brother jointly owned a highly prosperous weekly newspaper, from which they derived and divided an income of not less than seventy thousand pounds per annum, he rigorously practised many of the minor economies of life, one of which consisted in never taking a cab where an omnibus would do.

Now, most of the omnibuses which ply between the suburbs and the West End are largely patronised in the early morning by milliners' apprentices going to their daily toil, and it was in a rumbling caravan called, for some inscrutable reason, a 'Royal Blue,' that Bobbie Ashton first set eyes on Kittie Warner.

Kittie belonged to the great army of half-pretty

women who have only the potentiality of beauty, and not the actual possession, but her efforts to attain beauty had resulted in the possession of a grace that was more than a substitute for the genuine article. The evident care with which her dark brown hair had been dressed, the good taste with which her clothes had been selected, and the faultless fit of her gloves and boots, combined to make her ten times more attractive than the victorious beauty who feels supremely sure of herself. In short, she possessed just that leaven of modesty which the conscienceless man-about-town, who is sick of the flesh of sirens, houris, or lamiæ, feels personally called upon to dethrone. So, when she left the omnibus at, as it subsequently transpired, the street corner before her usual one, Ashton instantly, and as she had all along foreseen, followed her. It was then that he made the discovery that the girl was as well spoken as she was well built, and that by occupation she was a '*mannequin*,' or living model, in the showrooms of Madame Jeanne Sylvain, in Albemarle Street. As it was nearly ten o'clock, the hour at which Jeanne's girls had to be in their places, there was little time for trifling, but, though the Eve in the girl was rampant enough, she could make no appointment for that evening on account of the strictness (actively) of her 'mater' and (passively) of her 'pater.' These wise persons, going always to bed at ten p.m., ordained that their daughter should be home by nine—unless, as sometimes happened, she went to a concert or very select Cinderella with Isabelle Avery, her closest chum at Jeanne's, on which occasions she was permitted to spend the night at Isabelle's home, the whereabouts of which 'mater' and 'pater' believed to be at Clap-ham and Clap-ton respectively.

As the rule, like Excalibur, cut both ways, and Isabelle stayed—in her parents' imagination—with Kitty occasionally, that little wanton thought that the following evening would be a good one for a mythical elocutionary entertainment.

At a quarter past seven on the following evening Bobbie Ashton met Kittie Warner by appointment, and, proceeding with his customary caution, carried her off to one of those terrible Roman restaurants in Soho, where they serve a rapid-fire *dîner* of seven courses with a bottle of *petit bleu* chucked in for half-a-crown. To be sure, his stomach revolted at the greasy stuff, but he swallowed it as a matter of policy. Being rather deeply stung by Kittie, this *liaison*, he reflected, might easily become a permanency, and to take a milliner's girl at the very outset to one of the more fashionable dining-places, where the wine was a pound a bottle and the waiter looked glum at anything short of a dollar, would be to give her an absurd idea of her own importance. Too many women, he considered, were spoilt by having incense burned around them. Moreover, and fully expecting to be asked all sorts of questions concerning himself, he had already formulated a set of answers, by which, with his habitual and despicable economy, he became Mr Robert Ash, a publishing clerk in his own office, at £300 a year. This brilliant device would serve the double purpose of extinguishing the flames of cupidity common to all mistresses of lowly origin, and of excusing him from taking his *dulcinêa* into the charmed circles in which he proposed on alternate nights to be still the gay, *débonnaire*, and case-hardened old chappie. In the event of his ever feeling like rashly overstepping these prudent limits, he

could always, he reasoned with himself, have won a bit at backing horses.

After dinner and a single liqueur apiece, Bobbie took Kittie to the Trocadéro, in those days a dead-and-alive music hall with three male and sixteen female 'turns,' the whole 'enhanced by a commanding' (as the auctioneers say) promenade and lounge where at ten o'clock the evening-dress brigade met and bought drinks for the *demi-mondaines*—a nightly proceeding which old Bob Bignell, the proprietor, billed and advertised as 'The Réunion of Society.' Here, in a private box for which he paid two guineas, though he only owned to ten-and-sixpence, Bob Ashton laid verbal siege to the *mannequin*, whose philosophic surrender consisted solely in the artless and sorrowful enquiry:

"Otherwise, I suppose, you will never meet me any more?"

In something less than a month after this, Kate Warner had left her utterly impossible 'mater' and 'pater,' who were thereby enabled to wind up the clock and go to bed at sunset if they felt so inclined. 'Madame' was supposed to have detected so much latent ability in her assistant, that she had advanced her position and her wages materially, and, as her promotion rendered it necessary for her to live in the immediate neighbourhood of the showrooms, she had taken a small furnished apartment in a select lodging-house in Davies Street. In proof of all this prosperity, Kate handed her mother a whole sovereign towards the home expenses, which, even the most critical must admit, was corroborative evidence enough.

For the first time in his somewhat chessboardish career, Bob Ashton felt that he was within measurable

distance of complete happiness. His cosy bachelor rooms in Crown Office Row, in the Temple, saw him on the average about three nights a week, and the other men in his house wondered whether he had taken to card-playing. But Robert was taking no harm. His method of allowing his *mannequin* mistress about a fiver a week was to enclose an approximate, but always odd, sum of money in sovereigns and shillings in an envelope before leaving the office on a Friday, and carry it to her 'just as he received it.' The surplus or the shortage, as the case might be, was regulated by the number of nights on which he had been on publishing duty, and his ability to surrender the whole of his earnings was by reason of his enjoying an allowance from his mother—small, it is true, but sufficient for his needs. Not that Kitty ever would take the whole of the money. With a pretty sense of unselfishness, she regularly returned him whatever silver there was in the envelope—usually about a twelfth of the dole—for, after all, a man who is an all but constant smoker needs a little loose cash about him at times. And Bob would accept these remissions with a playful bow, and would then kiss the little witch chastely for them five times—once on the forehead, once on each eyelid, once on the nose, and finally on the lips.

Yet Bob was not precisely at his ease. His own deceit was but a trifling matter. The girl was more than well looked after according to her station, and to have taken her out of it would have been to run the risk of losing her. Besides, with much leisure, women can generally be relied on to get into mischief: nine hours a day at Sylvain's was about as fine a safeguard as a paramour could possibly carry. But, as Bob's

earlier fancy for the girl grew into a mixed passion between jealousy and affection, and ultimately into love, he began to see the undesirable side of her connection with Sylvain's establishment. As Kitty often explained to him, the milliners of the West End —when they were not mere male men, and foreigners at that—were either one thing or the other: 'frumps' or—well, something else. The 'frumps' certainly enjoyed a monopoly of the customers whose pedigrees appeared in *Burke*, but there were hundreds of grand ladies who flocked to Sylvain's, too, and, heaven knows! Jeanne Sylvain was no 'frump.' Her ateliers were the very smartest that existed between Bond Street and Park Lane, and their elegant appointments and snug little tea-rooms proved irresistible attractions to many beautiful women, who often brought their male friends with them. If these cavaliers chose to pay an account—as they invariably did—a cheque was courteously accepted, but no suggestion of money matters ever emanated from Madame, nor was anybody ever coaxed into making purchases. Frequently the male escorts were privileged to express an opinion on a frock that was being tried on, but quite as frequently they were making assignations with the *mannequins*, and occasionally, in the case of married men, they were brought for that especial purpose: as is sometimes heard at Monte Carlo, "*Trois, noir, manque et impair:*" Number Three has gained—a much-needed opportunity to follow up a little affair of her own. There was one noble lord in particular, who had been so good to one of Sylvain's girls that she felt personally affronted at being called to wait upon his countess, and once or twice she was on the point of telling him the name of the, doubtless,

platonic admirer—a Hebrew gentleman of Capel Court—who paid her ladyship's bills, but that the peer was too *roué* to be trusted to reward her by marrying her, even if she did help him to obtain his freedom. Sometimes a man cannot see that a wife who has sinned with him before marriage is any better than one who has proved unfaithful to him after.

Whenever Kitty told Bob of these things he grew displeased and spoke of taking her away; therefore the girl never mentioned to him a lady who was perhaps as careless of the convenances of society as any customer that Madame had. This was a certain Mrs Saintsbury, a beautiful woman still on the right side of thirty, and of that same self-reliant type as was the brave lass in the big railway strike, who, when no driver could be found to take the train out, cried, "*I'll* undertake to run the engine if only some skunk of a feller will feed the fire!" The burdens of widowhood sat lightly upon Mrs Saintsbury, for she paid four hundred a year for her flat in town alone, and was rarely seen in the same frock thrice. And yet there was that about her which won Kate's secret admiration. Possibly it was that she did not come to Madame's to drink, as so many ladies did. Kate had an inborn horror of spirit-drinking, and although, as was the custom of the dressing-room, in which each girl had to provide her ten shillings' worth—a bottle of three-star brandy and a dozen of soda-water—in her turn, she was virtually compelled to take her afternoon tipple with the rest, she really hated the very smell of the stuff.

Towards Kate, Mrs Saintsbury had always shown a kindly consideration, attracted, doubtless, by the girl's

gentle manners; and one afternoon, when she had been giving more trouble than she herself deemed reasonable, she slipped two sovereigns into Kate's right hand. It was done so quietly, so politely, that Kate began to doubt her own earlier judgment of the butterfly; Kate was temporarily short of money, too, for Bob was away in the country, and Mrs Bellingham, the landlady of the house in Davies Street, had suddenly increased Kate's rent from twenty-five to thirty-five shillings a week. In truth, it was only Mrs Bellingham's ill-bred idea of retaliation, Kate having previously complained of the two young ladies who shared an attic in the same house taking twenty minutes apiece each night to say good-bye to their sweethearts on the doorstep, on the ground that it "didn't look respectable"; but it was equally annoying and inconvenient at the time. A few days later Mrs Saintsbury asked Kate if she had a sweetheart, and, being told she had, but that he was out of town, she said, "Then, when you leave here to-night, come and see me. I am not going out all the evening, and we will have a cosy little supper together."

And what a happy evening it was! Just such a one as two unfettered schoolgirls might have spent together; and when Kittie left Mrs Saintsbury, who was going away for a month and would not return till early in December, she felt that she already loved her as though she were an elder sister—certainly as much as she loved Bob, for, with all her affection for Bob, his extreme, not to say insane, sensitiveness on her behalf was slowly but surely inducing a settled feeling of melancholy in her.

December always is a lively month for those who

are not too broke over the Manchester November Handicap, or those who, being flushed with success and wine by the result of the same event, were induced, as a merry jest, to sit down on the Pullman footwarmer and go to sleep, and who, on suddenly awaking, were fain to take the magnum out of the ice and sit in the pail for the rest of the journey to Euston, to enter heartily into its amusements; and Bob returned from his country trip literally bristling with cash. Whatever his business in the provinces had been, it had turned out well, for Kittie found him as free with the gold as was a certain dear old bygone sportsman, who once observed, "If by accident I make a fiver go as far as most people make a quid, I look on myself as a dam miser!" Kate was far too shrewd to ask impertinent questions, though she literally tingled with the curiosity of a Cluppins when Bob handed her a tenner and told her to get herself a pretty ball-room frock by Monday the fifth, as he intended to take her on that night to a more than ordinarily smart dance at the Freemasons'—for which, he added, as his old circumspection asserted itself, he had been given tickets.

Pale blue was Kittie's best colour, and before many hours had sped Swan and Edgar's receipts had been permanently swollen by an appreciable part of that tenner; while a hurried call of enquiry at the Tavern in a hansom had informed the little woman that the function fixed for the fifth was no less than one of the renowned 'Teddy' Solomon's periodical gilt-edged corroborrees, which at Aldershot and Capel Court, and St John's Wood and South Belgravia, were regarded as regular birthday nights, and of which all the world had heard. None the less was it the first entertain-

ment of any pretence that Bob had ever offered to take Kittie to, and she made her preparations in a becoming spirit of appreciation.

And sweet indeed she looked as on that fateful Monday night she stepped out of her brougham (hired from the jobmaster's in South Audley Street) and tripped lightly up the white druggeted stairs that led to the ball-room. Nor had she ever gazed upon so brave a sight before. The third dance on the programme, the lancers, had just started, and to the faultless playing of a band of forty picked musicians, each wearing a nosegay of scarlet geraniums as big as a cauliflower, five hundred and fifty-six (so one of the stewards said) of London's cheeriest young fellows and prettiest women, and all agile terpsichoreans, were fairly into their stride. With many of the women's faces Kittie had grown familiar through the agency of the theatrical photographer's shop windows, but the men slightly puzzled her until Bobbie pointed out the best-known amongst them. Thus she easily recognised the beautiful Mrs Frankie Marini, though she did not know that the Indian prince who danced with her was Dhuleep Singh, nor that another nabob who was the partner of a perfectly divine creature with a rope of matchless grey pearls around her throat was the Maharajah of Kuch Behar. Miss Lottie Dettmar and Mr Arthur Roberts, Miss Belle Bilton and Mr George Edwardes, Miss Agnes Hewitt and the Marquis of Queensberry, Miss Florence Levey and Lord 'Ned' de Clifford, Miss Minnie Duncan and Mr Charlie Harris, she could also have picked out for herself; but amongst the hosts of interesting people with whom she was not even photographically acquainted were Lord Mandeville, Miss Florrie

Wilson, Dan and Clem Finch, Miss Madge Shirley, 'Dickie the Driver,' Miss Elfrida Nunn, the only Romano, Miss Beatrice Gordon, Mr Hughie Drummond, Miss Flo Mackintosh, Mr Sam Lewis, Miss Gladys Carlton, 'Father' Jem Selby, Miss Lena Holroyd, the immaculate 'Swears'—and so many besides that her memory failed (as does mine) to retain even their names. But if the ball was a dream, the supper, served at half-past two, was a glorious awakening. Scores and scores of Strasburg pies there were, and Westphalian hams, and larded capons, and barley-sugar fretwork wherever it would go; while the only wines that were opened were a Duminy of '78 and a Mumm of '80, in magnums. By no means the stereotyped scramble for stodge familiar to devotees of public dancing, but a supper to dwell over—though, perhaps, as you remark, not in this place. Let us return, then, to the ball-room.

Kittie had just been dragged through the "Little Jack Sheppard" Quadrilles, the second dance after supper, by a good-looking but mistaken youth whose saltatory style reminded one of a swimming instructor 'treading' water, and was being taken to a seat, when, in the midst of a group, she recognised Mrs Saintsbury. Her joy at this unexpected encounter was very real and unaffected, and Mrs Saintsbury seemed equally pleased.

"Why, you wicked little minx, you!" laughed the beautiful woman, as, leaving her friends, she advanced to meet Kate. "Who that ever saw you in your demure moods and your quiet black frock would dream that you came to such dreadful places as this?"

"Don't call it 'dreadful'; besides, it is my first

offence," answered Kittie; and then, perceiving the awkwardness of her reply, she added, "and my—er—my 'intended' brought me here."

She could feel her cheeks growing pink with shame as 'intended' left her lips—shame at having deceived, however thoughtlessly, the friend who could not have reproved her had she blurted out the full, unpleasant truth. But the word had gone.

"Your intended, eh? Oh, this is very interesting," declared Mrs Saintsbury, in her prettiest manner. "I shall expect to hear all about this to-morrow, Kittie; indeed I shall call in on purpose. And, mind, *I* shall give you your wedding-dress, and Madame herself shall design it—you little slyboots! But where is this young gentleman? He should be looking after you."

Redly confused, Kate glanced hurriedly around and presently observed Bobbie, at some distance, standing talking with two other men.

"Ah, there he is," she said, indicating the group to Mrs Saintsbury, "one of those three men standing by the farther door. Not the one with his back turned to us, nor the one with the single eyeglass, but the one with the dark moustache—there! he is raising his hand to the one with the eyeglass now."

Mrs Saintsbury first looked critically at the distant group and then turned to Kate, with far more seriousness on her lovely face than was usually to be seen there.

"You must surely be mistaken, child," she said; "none of those three men, all of whom I know perfectly well, ever yet had any serious thoughts of matrimony."

"Of course, I *may* be wrong," admitted Kate, so feebly and reluctantly that her friend barely caught

her answer; and, still clinging to a shred of hope, she faltered, "Tell me their names, dear, will you?"

"Certainly I will," was the brisk answer, though its giver clearly saw that something was radically wrong. "The fellow with his back turned——"

"Oh, never mind *him*."

"But I *do* mind him. Have the goodness not to interrupt again. The fellow with his back turned towards us is Tommy Kerby, one of the most raffish and dissipated cads in London. He is daily expecting his mother's death, and his own will occur within three months of his succeeding to her property."

"Well?" asked Kate.

"Well, the fair one with the eyeglass is Captain Keith-Hannan. He's heart and soul in breeding and running racehorses, and—well, to say that he is immaculate would be about as reasonable as to pronounce human nature so. But he's useful to know at the meetings."

"Yes," murmured Kate, impatiently, and held her breath.

"And the one with the dark moustache is Bobbie Ashton, about the shrewdest, as he is certainly the richest, of the three. He and his brother own the ——" (Here she named the big weekly journal with whose official envelopes poor Kate was so familiar) —"and his income is between fifty and sixty thousand a year; not that he spends a tenth part of it. He is a terrible fellow with barmaids and such small deer —indeed, I was told at lunch only to-day that he has just devoted an entire fortnight in pursuing one who has gone to Bournemouth, or some such place. So you see, dear——"

"Yes, yes, I see it all, but—first see me out of this place, dear Mabel, will you?"

"Certainly, dear child, but what has come over you?"

"I will tell you to-morrow."

The vast orb of the situation was too great for mere tears. Never previously had Kate addressed Mrs Saintsbury by her Christian name, but she looked upon her now as the only friend she had left in the world. Absolute confidence in one living soul is life's greatest blessing to the weary.

As Kate and Mabel approached the door, Ashton noticed them and started forward. The first expression that came over his face on seeing these women together might well have been that which the spectacle of a two-days-old baby doing a serpentine skirt-dance would have evoked; but it changed almost instantly. He realised, at least, a part of the truth, and was about to let loose a torrent of explanatory gush, but Kate, stepping back so that Mabel Saintsbury stood midway between her and her lover, stopped him.

"Mr *Ashton*," she said, laying bitter stress upon the name, "our *liaison* must absolutely end here, if you please. If you are a gentleman you will not molest me at my place in Davies Street, nor refer to our past relationship. In a reciprocal spirit I promise never to repeat that you—*you*, sir, with your fifty thousand a year, ever took ten shillings a week from your mistress to buy your tobacco with!"

And she swept down the stairs.

. . . . . .

Best day's work she ever did for herself! For, with the prudent audacity gained by this experience, she

shortly afterwards netted one of the leading lights in the wholesale egg business—a splendid game when hens keep healthy and the astronomical sign is right—and, with a lapse of fifteen years, she is now respected and loved by all around her, and the joy and delight of a numerous progeny.

CHAPTER XI.

The village *versus* the town scandal—An Applecombe disgrace—Willie Amos—Flies from the miller's daughter—And catches a Tartar—Of the 'Old Durham Ox'—And his remarkable methods—He wins thirty-eight—And is expected to take bread-and-butter for it—His suggestions to facilitate a settlement—In praise of the lowly race-goer—A *menu* competition—Results in a walk-over—The tender spot in old Bill Goodey—A 'raw lad of ten'—What saved Goodey from the workhouse—Swears as a bull-dog showman—'Sister Mary'—Of her giving away, and—Of the pin which formed the souvenir of the occasion.

THE town liaison is, after all, an evanescent affair, which, as often as not, leaves the damsel 'who did' in better circumstances than before; but the scandal in the little village—the little village in which the only charity known is the chapel-directed relief of a few incurable invalids and a group of chronic beggars—*that* sort of wound leaves a proper and a lasting scar. Such a village, called Applecombe, is to be found nestling in the valley of Hampshire, hemmed in on three sides by nodding golden cornfields and on the fourth by the rippling, trout-haunted Test. The Applecombe life was, when I was familiar with it, mainly regulated by two churlishly-important resident families—the Marters at The Manse, and the Amos's at Vine Court. The respective Lady Bountifuls of these houses supplied the village with ample food for

jealousy and criticism, to which the inevitable chapel added a weekly dose of cant and pew-cuddling that more than sufficed to make existence tolerable. But while the Marters were merely well-to-do, the Amos's, so the gossips said, had barrels of it. Willie Amos, the only child of elderly parents, had inherited considerable property from his maternal grandfather, and having only loutish tastes, was never likely to cut seriously into his patrimony. With the women he was a perfect devil of a fellow, and in a more spirited community might have got many a hiding from an incensed husband or revengeful big brother, but the male Applecombers were mostly dull dogs, and far too unvigilant to detect the sly pressing of a loved ankle under the table or a surreptitious kiss behind the door. On the broad principle of the boy in the tuck-shop to whom everything that was sweet was pleasing, Willie Amos indulged in wide diversity, but was oftener with Grace Baker, the miller's daughter, than might have been the case had the girl not been motherless.

Grace was a sweetly pretty creature with about as much force of character as any one of her pet white rabbits, and as her father, sorely needing a housekeeper, spent most of his spare time making blunt but honest overtures to the widowed postmistress, the girl had far more liberty than was good for her. Consequently, on old John Baker entering the house unexpectedly one afternoon, he found Grace red-eyed and sobbing, with her handkerchief rolled into a wet cambric ball. Simple soul that he was, the girl's extemporaneous story of a splitting headache washed well enough with him; but not so with the postmistress when he idly mentioned the circumstance to

her later in the day. Good Mrs Matthison was a materialist who looked for a brick and grass Jerusalem or none at all, and she shook her head incredulously at the bare idea of a young woman blubbering herself hideous over a mere attack of megrim. All unexpectedly she visited the old mill house during the following forenoon, and—well, on that night poor old John Baker shed tears also.

In a few hours Grace Baker's fall was the topic of every tea-table in Applecombe, but nowhere did the news cause greater consternation than at Vine Court, for the first impulse of Willie Amos, with the fear of an action for seduction upon him, was to run away. Shamed out of this craven subterfuge by his little less cowardly father, Willie ultimately discerned the expediency of a speedy alliance with one Rose Sandiland, the fair daughter of the vicar of a neighbouring parish and a young lady to whom he had already paid some attention. Rose was already four-and-twenty, and as her worthy father, though the son of a peer, had nothing but his miserable stipend to live upon, marriage was virtually a necessity on her part. So admirably had she been brought up, too, that in her keeping Willie's fortune would be even more secure than in his own, and Amos *père* did not hesitate to advise an ante-nuptial settlement of every shilling upon the bride elect. As soon as the whole knavish proceeding should be capped by the clergyman, a long honeymoon spent on the Continent would surely demonstrate to the miller's daughter the utter hopelessness of seeking redress, even if it did not bring home to her the great basic truth that those who permit themselves to be ruined must expect to be despised. Meantime, any one of many consumma-

tions devoutly to be desired might ensue: the child, or even the young mother herself, might die; or Grace might elect to leave Applecombe altogether; or, assisted privately to furnish a modest cottage, she might marry some honest rustic who could not have expected to win her before her *débâcle*.

Not only did the Amos's see all these possibilities, but they actively debated them; while 'our Willie' formally proposed to Miss Sandiland and found no impediments put in the way of an early alliance. The lawyers and the dressmakers were set to work literally by the postal telegraph, and if the bridegroom elect did not seem outwardly overjoyed at the prospect before him, it was only because he was inwardly longing for some vaguely distant appointment, such, for instance, as the lone keeper of a new lighthouse on any bit of rock beyond the Needles. At the very outset the Amos's had stipulated with the Sandilands for a perfectly private wedding, by special licence, to be solemnised in London, and it wanted less than a week to the sealed date when Grace Baker bore a son. After hearing the news, the hope of the house of Amos remained in his own rooms—though he certainly did help the day out by getting hopelessly intoxicated before luncheon. On the morrow he was going up to town with his *fiancée* and her father, and his own father, to execute the marriage settlement at the family solicitor's, and the time for starting seemed to be whole weeks in coming.

But if Willie Amos passed the natal day of Grace Baker's child in a state of irresponsible inebriety, he had a brand new sensation to keep him in a whirl of bewilderment on his return from signing away his property. It really seemed as though Fate had wil-

fully kept back the information until he had not left himself a single acre to rest upon nor a solitary tree to take shelter under. Awaiting his return to Applecombe were the startling tidings that Grace had confessed to her only parent that the father of her child was—Fred Marter, the only son of the plutocrats of The Manse!

This wholly unexpected *dénouement* threw young Amos into that mixed state of feminine imbecility which the dear creatures themselves best describe as the sensation of not knowing whether to laugh or cry. In these fresh circumstances, and more particularly since report said that old Baker, in default of receiving any encouragement when he had called at The Manse with a hunting crop in his right fist, had instructed the village lawyer to issue a writ forthwith, there seemed no good or sufficient reason for going on with the contemplated marriage. There was indeed but one—one that loomed with unpleasant largeness on the horizon, too. Not only would the Sandilands have an indisputable right of action for breach-of-promise, but they already held that accursed ante-nuptial settlement as well! Can it be wondered at that when Willie Amos was put to bed by his man-servant, assisted by the butler, he was distinctly not in a condition which insurance agents would consider compatible with the life of 'a good risk'?

With a bad grace and the conscious superiority of the consummate ass, and before the altar of a London church which but for the clergy and the contracting families was empty, Willie Amos gave his name to Rose Sandiland. Great as was the charm of the bride's sweetness and refinement, it scarcely sufficed to offset the churlishness of the bridegroom's boorish

manner; indeed, it seemed a positive sin to cast a pretty maiden before such a cur. The wedding breakfast, eaten at a severely respectable restaurant out of deference to the cloth of the bride's father, was only a protraction of the general depression; and, breaking up the party as speedily as bare politeness would permit, old Amos despatched the newly-made pair to Paris, and carried his own consort home to Applecombe in a temper that continually bordered on eruption.

But not even the delights and distractions of Paris could alleviate the blighting affliction of matrimony which had fallen upon Willie Amos. No matter from what point of view he regarded his marriage it always became a nightmare, and the mere thought of the domesticity of his own fireside in the coming winter nearly drove him to talk seriously to *absinthe*, a form of alcohol in which even the problems of Euclid are capable of solution. Three deaths the coward ordinarily dies, but in the case of Willie Amos an amused Kismet considerately provided a fourth, and it took place on the morning when Willie's note-case needed replenishing, and he realised for the first time the humiliation of applying to his young wife for a cheque.

"Dear me! How fearfully extravagant we must have been," she cried; "nevertheless we will draw another fifty pounds and that must take us home."

Amos scarcely could believe his ears: such despotism was amazing. All that afternoon he wandered aimlessly about the boulevards and the passages in that state of rustic mental collapse which comes suddenly over the young farmer who has sold his beeves on his taking a glass with the affable

stranger he met in the fair; and the very next day he insisted on returning to England.

But I am lingering unduly. Life itself is made up of changing pictures, and when once the cheque-book passes into the grey mare's keeping the end of all romance in that domain is well in sight. By her excellent mother Rose had been forewarned of the pitfalls which beset the path of the rural husband who has yet to experience the full flavour of the town. And perhaps Mrs Sandiland was not entirely in ignorance of her son-in-law's motive in transferring his property. Anyway, Rose kept an inflexible half-nelson on the muniment chest, and—three months later, William Amos the younger was in the Court of Bankruptcy, to which he had presented his own petition.

During the week following the filing of that instrument I encountered the debtor himself in Old Bond Street, paying a most unusual round of visits to the creditorial horde, his tradespeople. To them he admitted that he was well able to pay his debts in full, nevertheless he implored them to attend the statutory meeting, and to strenuously resist any course save that of winding up the estate in Bankruptcy, with the Official Receiver as Trustee. And this, he said, for the sole reason that he most ardently desired the complete legal overthrow of a certain ante-nuptial settlement which he had executed under fear and duress, and with such unjust intention to evade the consequences of an anticipated action at law, that it had been a heavy load on his conscience from the instant of his signing it!

Yet the flinty-hearted Senior Registrar failed to see it. The Court of Bankruptcy, charging none too

lightly for its services, slowly dripped out to the creditors the golden syrup which the debtor's wife had previously poured in, and granted the distressed debtor an immediate discharge. And to-day that ante-nuptial settlement, hale and strong and full of running, stands as the vigorous cenotaph of a village scandal and a mocking monument to human meanness.

Women were bad parters ever. "They do not win with dignity nor lose with equanimity," once said John Corlett; and accepting this racecourse view of the matter, I can quote an instance in which a petticoated punter owed a bookmaker eight-and-thirty sovereigns and—then expected him to take it out in tea and bread-and-butter!

The bookie, a rugged, weather-beaten north-countryman, delighted in the sobriquet of the 'Old Durham Ox,' and was by his familiars addressed as 'Steve,' though I presume that he has passed on to his eternal reward, since I have not gazed upon his rosy old face for several seasons. A greater oddity than he would have taken some finding, even in Tattersall's Ring. Six feet tall, and beefy of build, he usually affected a combination of a black coat and waistcoat with a straw hat and white flannel trousers, giving one the impression that he was a butcher who longed to be a cricketer, but couldn't quite make it. He was none the worse for being slightly addicted to the bottle, and was at his best at the northern meetings, altho' he turned up everywhere, and never, to my knowledge, was detained by a stationmaster on account of overweight in luggage. But his memory, which I greatly envied him, was colossal. Elbowing his way to where the betting was thickest, Steve

would fight for his share of the business, and, quite innocent of book or pencil, would lay a dozen or more wagers. Then, when a temporary lull came, he would back out of the throng to where stood his clerk, to whom he would reel off with perfect accuracy: "Naow, Jim, three an' a half ponies t' favorite, Ted Hobson; an' seventy ta twenty, Mister Barclay. Seventy ta ten, Bird o' Freed'm, Harry Roberts; an' seven ponies, Mick Bentley. Seventy-five ta twenty, t' favorite, Alf Spaldin'; a hoonderd ta ten, Sailor Prince, Mister Gilbert; an' fifty ta five, Joe Capp. Twenty ponies, Eu-a-rasian, Jack Hammond; an' two-hoonderd ta ten, Cap'n Smith. A hoonderd ta eight, Melton, Joe Pickersgill; an' the same ta Bob Howett. Eight ta two, Oberun—I forgit his name—put it doon 'Repoorter'; an' fifty ta five, Castor, Charlie Cunnin'ham." Then, turning away again, he would resume: "Here, seventy-five ta twenty on the fee-uld, an' seven's bar woon. Fifties Candle-marse 'r Ty-a-rone!"

Nor was his pluck inferior to his memory; even at Derby, a meeting at which many bookmakers do not care to bet—where Steel has frequently stood down, and of which John Robinson has said, "I never come here without losing three thousand"—Steve would pepper the favourites undismayed; and his accounts were always there on the Monday.

Well, seven or eight years ago, at a jumping meeting at Sandown Park (as nearly as I remember), Stephen got taken on, in the costliest sense of the word, by one of the lady punters who nowadays swarm in our betting-rings without let or hindrance. Amongst the other petticoats that followed the meetings she was 'Louie,' and she lived in one of a block of flats in central London which were locally

designated, on account of the nature of the ground-floor letting, 'the Mansions over the milk-shop.' She was a siren of the hour-glass build, and, while no longer in her first bloom, she had none of the scars and moraines which render the well-chalked square of swansdown carried in the top of the stocking, or the little book of *papier poudré* (also known as 'eighty-leaves-for-ninepence'), indispensable. Right well she understood the art of frocking, and much preferred to wear a fetching *toque* at Newmarket than to lay up a halo in Paradise.

Louie, as I have said, got into old Steve's ribs for fifteen pounds to five before he was properly aware of it. Had only the horse rolled up he would have parted joyfully, but it seldom happens that the unvigilant fielder who has carelessly allowed an undesirable to get upon his book gets rid of the pest so easily. To continue the narrative in Steve's own words:—

"Later in the day she coom to me for a' even pony, Gazetteer, an' like a old fool I let's her 'ave it; an' twelve to eight Mondaine, what run second in the last race. Two unplaced's an' one second, an' damme, she was into me for thirty-eight quid! Stupid? Aye, laad, even the bloomin' clerk rounded on me! He shets up the book an' wrops it up in the *Sportsman* what he'd got in his kick, an' he says, 'Take yer props, guv'nor, I'm orf! Strike-me-lucky, if the time's come when *these* sort o' people can bet on the nod, I'm jiggered if *I* don't 'ave a flutter.' It makes a old man feel a fool when a bit of a flash monkey of a clerk can give him backtalk o' that sort; yet I felt as I deserved it, too. So I says, 'Jim, don't be a fool, lad,' I says; 'if she don't brass up termorrer, just you

put a note o' the amount inside o' my settlin' book an' leave it ta me, but *you* shan't have to write her name no moo-re. Here's a couple for ye: ye're a honest lad, an' we ain't goin' ta part over nothin' o' *this* sort.' Well, would ye believe it, I never gits to speak to her fair an' square till th' Brighton meetin', the week afoo-re th' Newmarket Craven, tho' she'd seen me an' got away from me twenty times at least! But up on White Hawk Hill I gits her, so ta speak, in a coor-ner, an' I says, 'Looey, my gal, this ain't cricket; ye've bin in th' book for eight-an'-thirty pound ever since th' jumpin' season; naow what're ye goin' to do about it?' 'What am I goin' to do about it, dear old Stevie?' says th' witch; 'why, I'll tell you that when you come an' have some tea wi' me as you goes down into th' town ta-night; tell yer flyman to pull up at number 17B Rock Gardins, just afoo-re ye turn onto the front. Don't dissapint now, becos I shall git th' shrimps.' Well, lad, ye might ha' floored me, it was all so suddin, but I couldn't call off acos she was gone, an'—lord on'y knows how it was, but, as soon as th' last race was over, there was me in a fly, a-drivin' to Rock Gardins just as if I'd bin a two-year-old! Th' little maid as opened th' door shows me into th' settin' room, an' there's Looey, in a sort o' pink satin pinnyfoo-re, a-layin' on a sofy wi' a couple o' boat-cushions under her an' a-readin' a book o' fairy tales! But, on catchin' sight o' me, she jumps up, chucks her arms around me neck, an' starts a-settin' on me knee an' a-tellin' me all about her 'mommer' an' her 'popper,' an' how she wants me to give her me photygrarph to wear in her watch, an' all while they're a-layin' th' table for th' catlap stakes. But, lor', it's no use of old fools a-tryin' to be boys. I

on'y ate a bit o' crumpet, an' when she wunt a-lookin', porred th' tea down th' back o' th' coal-skittle, an' then I finds I've got ta break away. I makes all th' excuses as I kin think of, an' when she sees me to th' front door she gives me a kiss as makes th' gas burn blue, an' she says, 'Sallylunn's termorrer, Stevie, an' th' same time, mind.' 'My gal,' says I, as fatherly as I could under th' circ's, 'don't hold! You've got me knock'd-out, an' Rock Gardins sees me no moo-re, bit I'll act fair an' square. Knock five quid off'n the account for this, an' if ye can't rake up the other thirty-three by Monday, I'll slip my clerk to square it; he's bin brought up on soft food an' kin play this game from a to z, but old Steve's joined th' reserves. So good-bye, gal: knock off five.'"

Your lowly racing man learns, puppy-like, to shun the things that bite him, but, eat what he may in moments of success or for appearance's sweet sake, his native gastronomy is always true. Once, riding up from Leicester on the eight-and-a-halfpenny bench with three shining lights of the outer enclosure, I noted that their conversation turned on what they should order for dinner and where they should partake of it on reaching town. Of itself this fact is worthy to be recorded, if only for the relief it afforded to the invariable 'inquest' on the day's running, and the monotony of hearing cursed the eyes, and the limbs, and the hearts of the jockeys who 'never tried a (say, slaughterhouse-y) yard,' but contrived most artistically to get beaten on the post itself by the shortest of heads.

The striving of the trinity to fix upon an ideal meal made very good hearing, though it failed to advance its promoters' object by a single inch. For whatever

one of them proposed the other two were sure to negative, and so the thing dragged on till we were well through Wellingboro'. It was then that one of the trio, by name Bill Sharp, had an inspiration. From the back part of his mighty brain he brought it forth and fostered it upon the unobjecting company. Why not make it a skill competition? Five bob apiece in the kitty—and here he placed his own billycock, rim upwards, on the seat beside him—and let each competitor map out an ideal dinner for a hungry racing man to whom money was, for the nonce, no object. And he whose *menu* was in bulk adopted was to rake in the 'fifteen blo'' and have first right, of the company present, to publish a cookery book. Did it go?

Indeed it did, as it deserved to do. Each of the hungry three first went down into his jeans for the necessary silver, which he chucked into the hat; then each fell to thinking laboriously, as though the exertion seriously pained him.

"Now then," cried Bill Sharp, after five minutes of this brain-overhauling, "who starts off?"

"Oh, it don't signify who starts," replied one of the twain who clearly was not a leader, adding, with a specious desire to ensure equity, "Of course I take it you don't mean a *musical* dinner?"

"Music me aunt!" growled Sharp; "d'ye think we're a lot o' dam French bluejackets at Cherbourg, that's got to swallow tinned 'orse becos' the band plays the Marseillaise?"

A little abashed, but still with the growing confidence of one who feels that he's got the winner in the stable if only he can get it out, the third man stated:

"Suppose," said he, "we says the Caffy Royal, an'

one o' them little tables on the left as you goes in from Air Street——"

He paused, probably to gain time, but not a murmur, either of dissent or approval, broke the impartial silence.

"Well," the suggester went on, clearly disappointed, "we leads off with hor' doov', various—such as sardines, an' capers, German harengs, anchovies, an' Lyons sossysong."

"I thought there was to be no music?" chipped in the second man.

"Lyons sossysong ain't music, ye gillie!" retorted the chap who was making the *menu*; whilst Bill Sharp, who was jotting it down on the margin of his race card, warned the interrupter that he'd be disqualified if he entered the ring again.

"After the hor' doov'," continued the candidate for honours, obviously encouraged, "we takes whichever soup we individually prefers—thick or clear—an' for fish I suggests a sole à la Louey Quinsy——"

"Don't you mean Louie Freear?" interrupted the garrulous one.

"Louey Quinsy," repeated the trier, ignoring the intrusion, "followed by saddle o' lamb an' a poolay ong casserole—a fowl cooked in a sort o' tureen with streaky bacon round it. Then, of course, there's sallid, liqueurs, ice-pudd'n, cigars, and corfy, and—er—well, that's good enough for *me* to bank on."

"No remarks yet," Bill Sharp interposed, holding up his hand warningly. "Now, Shorty, *you* go on."

Shorty dashed off the mark as though he had only got to go three furlongs.

"Rats on yer Caffy Royal to begin with!" he cried; "give *me* the Cecil. As for choice o' tables,

you can set wherever ye like. Then send for the head *chef* an' give him cart blong to slip himself, an' —well, I needn't particularise no further."

But this was roundly vetoed. Unless he felt content to forfeit his five shillings and consider himself a non-starter, he must name the dishes that should compose his dinner.

"Well," said he, beginning somewhat diffidently, "we'd have the hor' doov', an' the soup, of course—*turtle* soup, I think, if it's in season. Then, I vote lobsters, done à la American, with curry-powder, an' some bully-baise—cert'nly some bullybaise: I had some bullybaise on the pier at Boulogne las' summer, an', may I die, I could ha' ate a stone of it if it had ha' been there an' ready! After the bullybaise, some noisettes de mootong, a compoted pigeon or two"—he was obviously growing reckless on finding himself rapidly getting out of his depth—"a few mayonnaises an' things, some asparagus in branches, an artichoke or two, an' bloater-roes an' Neapolitan ices to top off with."

Then it was that Bill Sharp spoke, slowly and deliberately.

"If the ch'ice fell upon *me*," he remarked, "to set a racin' man down to the feed as would give him the greatest satisfaction—say, did ye ever hear of sich a thing as a forty-ounce cut o' rump steak, cooked in one piece——"

Loud murmurs of approval were already audible. Bill did not fail to notice them as, raising his voice to the crescendo pitch, he went on:

"——piled up with fried Spanish inyuns, with a side-dish of biled kebbige with a splash o' vinegar over it, an' a couple o' pots o' Bass's sixty-shillin' bitter ale——"

"Here, cop hold o' the stakes," the two defeated men cried with one accord as they tilted the silver in the hat out into Sharp's outstretched palm; "though ye don't deserve it."

"And why not?"

"Why not? Why, damyer! it's a *walk-over*!"

And so it was. Nor (being on the subject) should the recklessly self-righteous suppose that the humbler sportsman only goes to his home to wallow in alcohol and in gore. May I give you an honest picture of my own observation on one recent Saturday night?

In the stuffy little kitchen of a fly-blown 'flat' half a hundred feet above the level of an over-populated street off the Caledonian Road, N., a burly, middle-aged man, whose not unkindly bull-dog face and generous nose had been pounded out of God's original mould during the mad, merry, welshing old Kingsbury-cum-Streatham Common era, sat in an old deal chair and gazed lovingly at eight pairs of juvenile boots of graduated sizes which stood in a row upon the dresser blackboard. It was past eleven o'clock, and old Bill Goodey, physically aweary after an afternoon's heavy 'fielding' in the small ring at Sandown Park, was temporarily alone. The comparatively young woman—his second matrimonial venture—who had pegged eight holes against him in the nuptial cribbage-board since she had come into his life's game on the Sunday after Donovan's Derby, was out in the market thoroughfares where shoulders of New Zealand mutton and ribs and flanks of Argentinian frozen beef—('union jack,' its patriotic name, is for the reason that cut it where you will when it is cooked it's red, white, and blue)—were being sold by Dutch auction, and the eight 'holes' themselves were snoring positive rents

in their hard flock bolsters in the bedrooms adjoining. In the absence of M. le Matou, the domesticated grimalkin, who had gone in search of a lady friend who had broken the date, the timid little mice ran bases between the fire-place and the wood-cupboard, whilst the dissatisfied black beetles, having eaten up the borax that had been spread to destroy them, and being still famished, were scaling the kitchen range in order to gnaw the grate-polish off the oven door.

Few natures are so hard or so callous as not to have at least one tender spot, and a child can generally find it. And as old Bill Goodey sat there affectionately contemplating the sixteen assorted little trotter-cases, all blacked and polished in readiness for the Sabbath morning, his eyes filled with happy tears. Men who reach middle age and have no babies to boss, and men who at forty are toiling to support a railway omnibus load of them, are always keenly sorry for each other; and old Bill, as he gazed at those boots, felt that he had indeed been blessed. Pair by pair he picked those boots up and turned them over, from the bottines of the baby, more worn at the toes than on the soles, by reason of their owner's favourite mode of locomotion, up to those belonging to his son and heir, the urchin who had been maliciously overcaned by the Board School teacher, and who, in the subsequent police-court proceedings, was described by the local reporter, with far more appropriateness than was apparent while the boy kept his clothes on, as 'a raw lad of ten.' All through the inspection old Bill's queer face fairly beamed with genuine love.

As one by one old Goodey turned the worn soles ceilingwards, the silent eye fell upon certain quaint bits of metal, some shaped like miniature new moons

and some like the 'quarters' of a dissected orange, which were nailed here and there to the youngsters' clumps, manifestly to resist the ravages of wear and tear upon the sole-leather. To the unenlightened wanderer from the western end of the town they might have been talismanic tokens which, by some hidden power, dominated the footsteps of their wearers and turned them aside from evil paths. Sin proverbially walks in slippery places: might not these magical appendages have a virtue in averting death, disease, or disaster? But, whatever their character—their mission—their significance, old Goodey knew them well. In his rough breast they awakened fresh emotions, new tremors, for, as he set the last pair of boots down on the potboard, he lifted up his voice and cried aloud, with much feeling and deliberateness:

"GAWD—BLESS—BLAKEY!"

In a tone of such deep gratitude and heartiness did he couch the prayerful utterance, that one wondered intuitively who this benefactor might be. Just then old Bill exclaimed again:

"Yes, Gawd—bless—him! For if it hadn't ha' been for his fourpenny packets o' cast-iron boot-pertecters, why, these destructive little blighters would ha' driven me an' mother into the work'us *years* ago!"

How grieved was I that I had stayed to see sordid self-interest triumph over glorious generosity! Which, by the way, calls up another and quite different story.

It is of the days when the Pelican Club was in the zenith of its glory, and when Swears, its proprietor, went in rather heavily for dogs. Cats are, as a rule, more indigenous to clubs than dogs, although the hospitable Raleigh had (and may have still) a certain wire-haired bull-terrier of no particular breed, who,

after being run over in Waterloo Place by a passing hansom, sought asylum with a broken shoulder in the club doorway, and subsequently enjoyed the rare distinction of being duly elected a member, at a subscription to be paid in rat tails. But the Pelican dogs all came of champion strains ; and a particularly beautiful bitch was ' Sister Mary.'

Now, one of the heroes of those distant days was a right good fellow named Talbot Clifton, and the most diligent enquiry has failed to reveal to me what has become of him. Should he still perambulate this troubled sphere, may he be as hearty and as happy and as genial as ever he was ; should he have passed away, as alas ! so many have done, may the earth lie lightly on him.

Talbot was in the happy condition in life which was in those days known as being ' full of beans ' ; there was one thing only that he yearned to possess to crown his happiness, and that was ' Sister Mary.' But Swears was known to think rather highly of the dog, and, save in a desperate fit of ' liver,' or remorse supervenient to some unexampled burst of extravagance, would be unlikely to part with her save at a fancy figure. In other words, his banker, as well as his physician, would have to advise the step. Dog-dealing has so long been elevated to the plane of the Arts that only to the neophyte is it necessary to explain how, day after day, Clifton narrowly watched Swears to catch him in a trading mood. The ante-luncheon period was about his easiest time. Overnight he would be brilliantly the King of Clubs, embracing all his subjects : next morning would find him in some remote corner, a discarded deuce. So Talbot Clifton chose eleven in the forenoon to approach Swears with

a view to purchase 'Sister Mary,' and showed him fifty pounds in notes. But as this was no more than her fair market price, Swears only seemed amused. He treated the whole thing as a joke, and capped it with a pint of wine and two glasses ; and Talbot continued his morning walk more set on possessing the dog than ever. He was impelled by one of those impulses which so frequently actuate a woman to do something quite opposed to her inclination, and which everybody who respects her implores her not to do. He was bound to have 'Sister Mary' at any figure.

By easy stages—by tens and twenties—he got up to one hundred pounds ; but Swears was still obdurate.

"Ask me, dear old Talbot," bleated the King Pelican in tortured tones, "for anything else you like —my *chef*—my luckiest raceglasses—my favourite walking-stick—anything in the world. But 'Sister Mary'—no, money mustn't buy her. No, no, leave me, leave me!"

Nevertheless Clifton detected a weakening in Swears' tone which gave him new hope. That "leave me, leave me" argued the approach of a helplessness which would have to be played on at the next encounter. So, getting to hear that Swears had had a particularly scorching Thursday night, Talbot dropped into the club somewhat earlier than usual on the Friday morning.

"Well, Swears——," he began.

But Swears, with sadness written large on every feature of his face, wrung the outstretched hand and endeavoured to anticipate what its owner would have said.

"Ah, dear old thing, I know what you're about to say. You have set your heart on 'Sister Mary,' and

have come to offer so much money for her that poor old Swears can't make a sound. You don't know, old man, what I think of that dog, and yet my regard for you—you understand me—is even greater. I've had forty struggles with myself since you first asked me to let you have her, and, as I've told you over and over again, no money will purchase her. But look here, dear old man, I'm so fond of you, you know, that I've made up my mind—*to give her to you!* She's yours from this moment; in fact, thinking you'd be in, I sent George to the Strand to buy a special lead for her, by which you can take her home. And God bless you both!"

So overcome was Clifton by this unexpected generosity, that he could not adequately express his thanks.

"Really—ah—I hardly like——," he faltered.

"Never mind," chipped in Swears, "she's yours, yours absolutely. Of course, any little trifling thing you like to give me as a souvenir—some little pin or something—is quite another matter. But 'Sister Mary' is yours."

"My dear old Swears," cried Clifton, only too readily embracing the golden opportunity for repaying the compliment, if ever so slightly, "only say the word! Shall it be a pin, or a ring, or what?"

"Well," answered Ernest, with some diffidence, "it's not of the least consequence; but suppose I choose some little thing myself?"

"Yes, that would be delightful. You know Streeter's, in Bond Street—but of course you do. I have an account with them. Perhaps you would be good enough, when you are passing, to drop in and select something?"

"Certainly, if you wish it," answered Swears, meekly "Hadn't you better give me your card to them?"

"Of course I had. Here you are."

From his cigarette-case he took a card, and, inscribing it to Messrs Streeter, wrote a message on the back requesting them to supply Mr Swears with whatever he desired.

Within two minutes of Clifton leaving the club with the bull-dog, Swears started for Bond Street. Pausing only for an alcoholic peg at Jubber's—just for luck—he crossed the road and entered the jeweller's.

"You understand this, I suppose?" he observed, handing the inscribed card to a shopman, and the assistant bowed obsequiously and asked what goods he might have the honour of showing.

"Oh, a scarf-pin, I think," said Swears, and forthwith a magnificent selection of pins was submitted. Again and again were fresh and beautiful ornaments brought out, but Swears seemed utterly unable to make a choice. Other urbane salesmen came upon the scene from time to time and made suggestions in most deferential style, but Swears' entanglement appeared only to increase. He did not even know definitely which precious stones he preferred.

"The fact is," he at length said half apologetically, as he paused with three emerald headlights in one hand and two rare black pearls in the other, "I am really not addicted to jewellery, but it's nice to have something by you in case of a bad week. Perhaps you won't mind assisting me. Pick me out something quiet and gentlemanly that—er—*that will pawn for three hundred!*"

And Swears walked back to Gerrard Street with a four-hundred-and-eighty guinea ruby glinting in his black satin scarf!

CHAPTER XII.

A Sandown Park memory—Archer's marvellous nerve—One of his 'certs'—The ambition of Joseph Andrews—He prepares—To tackle the mile record—And makes a 'cert' of it—He retires from running circles—Of the Sheffield monkey—That took to ratting—And his tidy methods—Christmas Eve at Piccadilly Corner—Views of the Punching Machine—And of Black Harry—Who, with his friend, Joe Scott—Gets up a 'Hat Stakes'—Of the spirited betting on that event—The race itself, and—The victory of a rank outsider!—Finale.

IT being indubitably true that without luck mere merit is foredoomed to failure, it must ever be a source of anxiety to those who are experiencing a temporary slump, but who still desire to keep up with the procession, to fix the precise limit to which they will go in drawing on their stock of rectitude. It bothers me enough, I know. But as I stood on one Friday afternoon of many years ago in the weighing-room at Sandown Park in conversation with a certain 'owner' of those times, there came along Fred Archer and took my associate of the moment away. For several minutes the pair engaged in quiet but earnest conversation over by the door of the gentlemen-riders' dressing-room, and presently, when Archer had to mount and ride off through the trees, my friend came back to me and told me to be sure to meet him at

the same spot before racing commenced on the following afternoon. I was not entitled—nor inclined—to ask the reason why, but, having saturated myself quite early in my apprenticeship (as every ardent racing journalistic novice should do) with the methods by which pre-historic plungers played the Great Game during the old red sandstone period, I was quite prepared to experience the then unprecedented luxury of standing in a *coup*. And though at the time the whole of the facts were not laid before me, I subsequently ascertained them to be as follows.

Archer had been gambling—(Official corroboration of this may not be forthcoming, since it is still believed in certain quarters that the only jockey ever suspected of such a thing was torn to pieces in Tattersall's, and is still hanged in effigy annually at Newmarket; nevertheless what I have stated is a fact)—and, up to that Friday afternoon, was three thousand to the bad on the week. Seeing nothing in that day's programme on which he could get out, he had conceived the idea of tendering himself a small benefit performance on the following afternoon, and had spotted, as a likely animal to do the main 'turn,' a mare in which my companion of the weighing-room owned a half share, and which was engaged in a handicap that had been made some time. With his marvellous brain he had not only picked out the horse, but had sized up the entire possibilities of the situation.

"There will be ten or eleven runners," he said, in effect, "and S—— will be favourite, while ours will be quite five or six to one. If only you will wire for your mare, I will pay for a special train to get her here; will ride her, and you shall be on a monkey to nothing besides the stakes."

"But," demurred the half owner, who had already brownly studied the race by the odour of the lamp, "there are at least *two* that will beat my mare, Fred."

"Quite right," answered Fred; "I read it that way myself, and will arrange accordingly."

"Then," said the owner, with as much calm resignation as befits one who already sees his own way out of the jungle, "the wire goes off this instant!"

Long before racing started on the Saturday, the mare was there; and the printed result is one of my favourite resorts in the old book *Calendar*. For everything happened precisely as Archer had prophesied, S—— starting favourite, but being beaten by our mare by half a length. It was a glorious triumph, though I, being compelled by circumstances which do not concern the reader to fly fairly close to the stubble at the time, and having, amongst other things, to hock my gold watch for a fiver at the corner of Craven Street, netted only sixty-eight sovereigns, or four to one to seventeen pounds, 'ready.' As all persons of sense must desire the reduction of the much-vaunted 'uncertainties of the Turf,' of which the opponents of horse-racing make such a sickening mouthful, Archer's effort was distinctly laudable, inasmuch as a greater 'cert' never followed on the fall of the flag.

But, as well as the 'certs' that follow the falling of a flag, there are those that succeed the cracking of a pistol; and the long-ago hero of one of these is a certain person of such inflexible integrity to-day, that his identity must be masked in these pages by the pseudonym of Joseph Andrews. He is a very real and reputable citizen, carrying the gold-headed cane which inspires confidence, and adorning his coachman's

beaver with the cockade to which (in the words of poor Charlie Head) he is entitled as a life-member of the Army and Navy stores. Yet, years ago in the days of his non-pedigreed obscurity he was only a poor boy in Sheffield, free from bad ambition beyond the walls of the cutlery manufactory in which he was engaged, and punctuating the drudgery that fell upon him only by a weekly visit to the running grounds. For in those days the youth of Sheffield were badly bitten by the Harry Hutchens microbe—worse than they've ever been before or since. At least one pair of running drawers was to be found in the humblest wardrobe; while Joseph Andrews was so deeply stung, that he was openly going without underclothes in order to buy a stop-watch. By-and-by he could do the mile in four-twenty-nine and two-fifths. He began to wear a sort of 'keep your eye on this space' air, and to discern possibilities in life quite apart from the grindstone. He could go and sit in a corner with the back page of the *Sporting Life* on a Saturday, and completely give himself up to an advanced form of mental intoxication; all that he yearned to do was to take down the number of one W. Slade, who had lowered the mile record to 4·29⅕.

Whenever a man feels like making a fool of himself he can always find someone to egg him on with a cheer, was one of the aphorisms of the late George Bateson; and, by the same rule, the modern athletic Raleigh, who fain would climb but that he fears to fall, can generally be provoked into making the essay. And so it came to Andrews' ears that on the matter being mentioned to a certain bookmaker in the town, an argumentative fellow named Jim Bacon, he had asked with a sneer whether the menacer of Slade's

record intended to have pneumatic casters under him, or merely to defer making the attempt until a favourable electrical disturbance was taking place at Newhall. These and many similar taunts caused Andrews to appeal to a genial tavern-keeper named Bell, who had already backed up and brought out several promising runners, and, as Jim Bacon continued to maintain that all Sheffield's real athletes were dead and buried and was quite willing to back his opinion with his money, a match against time was ultimately arranged. For a stake of fifty pounds a side Andrews was to run a mile between two given milestones on a level bit of turnpike road which lay just outside the bricks and mortar of the town, in three weeks from signing articles; and in order to win he had got to wipe out Slade's time of $4{\cdot}29\frac{1}{5}$. The affair was to be kept masonically secret, as, in the event of Joe turning out a topsawyer, there was big money to be picked up at the many gate-meetings which abounded all round the cutlery capital.

So Joseph placed himself almost entirely in the hands of the tavern-keeper, who dabbled so much in sport that he kept on his premises a tough and wiry trainer who was equally at home in running a pedestrian into form or walking a coursing greyhound into condition. This genius possessed the additional virtue of being absolutely speechless save to his employer, and had never even been known to address a dog during a ten-mile tramp save with one of two mysterious words sounding like 'gip' and 'bor' respectively, but which the intelligent brutes seemed quite to understand. Before Joseph had been many evenings on the road with this schoolmaster, his quick perception told him he was a shine. Though

his silent tutor never uttered a single deprecatory word, or even grunted his dissatisfaction, there was a despair in the way in which he put away the stop-watch after timing a spin, that was more expressive than any lecture. Mr Bell seemed strangely apathetic, too, and by the end of the first ten days of his training Joseph Andrews felt almost sick at heart enough to shed tears. To his good friend Bell, he reflected, he was a useless mouth ; and how little consideration the philosophic victualler had for *bouches inutiles* was shown when he wrung the necks of three black hens that hadn't laid for a fortnight, and then had the hen-house altered to accommodate a badger. Again there was the mortification of losing a match to so cocka-whoop an adversary as Jim Bacon, who might safely be relied upon to put on all his frills and spend several days in going round Sheffield blowing about what he had done to the new Deerfoot. Despairing of winning his race by any earthly means, Joe might even have gone down on his knees in his little garret and beseeched divine protection against disaster, as the matadors do before entering the bull-ring, if only he had known about it.

At twelve o'clock on the night before the attempt, Joe Andrews lay uneasily upon his attic bed, watching through the window, which was innocent of any sort of blind or curtain, the great gun-metal-coloured clouds chasing one another across the face of the moon. In vain he turned over and tried to go to sleep : his gaze *would* wander back to that great blue vault above him, so like a deep and mighty ocean across which so many dark and smoke-shaped islands were drifting rapidly towards destruction. And when, in four or five hours' time, this panorama passed away :

what *then*? The daylight; the dawning of the day which was to see him humbled—disgraced—jeered at!

Joe got up, and, opening the window, looked out. Forty feet below him, in the little stone-flagged yard, lay an odd collection of implements and materials belonging to the worthy jobbing builder who rented the two kitchens. There were two or three nine-inch drain-pipes and salt-glazed junctions, some plasterers' laths, a half-used sack of Portland cement, some shovels sticking in a heap of sand, some broken bricks, some red pantiles, a trowel or two, and a variety of other lumber which only those who live in the lime-dust could find a use for, or even catalogue.

Joseph Andrews stood looking at these things till his eyes took on a new alertness, and the evil thought was flashed across his brain—*dare* he?

Desperation urged him on. He slipped into his clothes with silent celerity and sneaked down the stairs carrying his shoes in his hand, like a faint-hearted safe-blower approaching a ticklish job. Access to the back yard was not difficult to gain, for none of the occupants of the lower flats were millionaires, and rarely used an iron bolt—except in self-defence. And, once there, Joe knew what he wanted. Making his selection hurriedly, and placing his borrowings in the bottom of a bushel basket, he next shouldered the basket and let himself out by the front door.

It being, by now, nearly one o'clock, the streets were fairly deserted; but Joe kept in the shadow of the houses and sped along towards the northern suburbs of the town. From the rate at which he scuttled along he might have been his own ghost, doomed to run the race in perpetuity and going

to the post—just as midnight wayfarers have seen a phantom Archer riding across Newmarket Heath. But if he only trotted through the silent streets of Sheffield, he fairly broke into a run as, chuckling with laughter, he gained the country road and presently ambled past the first of the two milestones which were to play such a prominent part in his future history. He laughed at the old grey stone whose information through several generations had been as unchanged as was that famous panacea which Burton says was prescribed by Dioscorides, approved by Mathiolas, and repeated by Aldrovandus; but the object of his nightly prowling lay further on. His journey ended at the second milestone, where, having first looked cautiously around, he unlimbered the bushel basket. The paltry, but sufficient, gleam of light that followed the ignition of the candle, disclosed a trowel, a peck of cement, and a labourer's tin dinner-pail. Gripping the milestone as firmly as blind Samson grasped the pillars of the Philistines' doomed house, Joseph ultimately rocked and tugged the granite recorder till he loosened it in its bed, and, within twenty minutes, he was able to lift it bodily out of its settings. He would have shouldered it, but that its weight was too great, and it was only with difficulty that he could carry it at all. When once he got it above his knees, however, he shambled back along the road with it for considerably over one hundred yards, and there he set it down. Then with his tallow dip he made a minute survey of the roadside, spending eight or ten minutes in selecting a suitable spot. In another ten, plying the trowel with the desperation of a rebellious convict digging for his liberty with a tin dinner-plate, he had dug a small

oblong grave just big enough to receive the bottom half of the block of granite, which he was careful to insert with rigid accuracy. Some of the cement was then sprinkled down the interstices on all sides and moistened with the water from the dinner-pail. It was a highly creditable job for a novice, and satisfaction shone in Joseph's face as he gazed at his handiwork.

But day was breaking, and there yet remained the old hole to be filled in and turfed over. Carrying the earth which he had thrown up from the new to the old site, therefore, Andrews filled in the original trench, and carefully covered the freshly-disturbed mould with some sods cut from the meadow on the other side of the greystone Yorkshire wall. So artistically did he graft the growing greensward, and afterwards obliterate his own footmarks by adroitly trailing his coat in the dust, that no evidences of the operation remained, nor would one pair of eyes in a hundred have detected the patch where once the second milestone stood. Somewhat wearied by this unaccustomed work, but sustained by the conviction that he had made his match a 'pinch' indeed, Joseph gathered up his implements and started for home with a light heart. True, one brief gasp of apprehension thrilled him ere he gained the stone pavements. When nearly into the town, a forlorn tramp stared so curiously at the bushel basket that Andrews grew inwardly alarmed, and, when the wanderer had disappeared, sunk the whole of the guilty impedimenta in a roadside pond, greatly to the disturbance of an old she-duck, who didn't forget to express her righteous vexation or to proclaim her religious opinions generally.

Two hours later the race was run. Small as the

company was to have been, Jim Bacon had brought enough of his pals with him to have posted one at every fifty yards; nor had Mr Bell been able to restrict his crowd of sporting customers—the very cream of his private bar—to less than twenty-two. So, with the dumb trainer bringing an equally silent chum, there were nearly sixty spectators to see Joe Andrews make his cheeky attempt to lower Slade's mile record.

And, in the race-course vernacular, "how did he *do* it?"

He went off the mark like an arrow from a bow, and, flying ahead in a style which suggested 'evens' at a hundred on any day next week, he breasted the tape amidst wild and enthusiastic shouting in exactly 4·29! Not only did the Bellites go wild with delight, but the Baconites also, for in the whole wide world there are no two living beings on whom new friends are showered in greater abundance than the jock that rides the winner and the ped that cuts the time.

But in all his triumph Joe never lost his head. His chief, indeed his only, ambition, he declared, was to "go up and see London," notwithstanding the wise and well-meant admonitions of those who had aforetime seen equally promising lads 'seeing London'—generally with one eye shut. Quite likely, if only the money lasted, the apparently inflated youth added, he might take in Switzerland as well. So, all in ignorance of the real motive which impelled Joseph's going away, the honest counsellors merely groaned aloud—groaned, for the reason that the little pig that had fought its way to the front couldn't be induced to stay there and put both fore-feet in the trough—and dried up; and Joe lingered in Sheffield only long

enough to get his baggage. But the second milestone has not moved one inch; perhaps, as Andrews, now a portly, middle-aged capitalist, remarked in affluent amiability the other day:

"I must ha' took more pains with it than what I thought I done!"

Once, according to the *viva voce* of the late Thomas Henry Callaghan, who enjoyed the double distinction of being both a Bark and a Tyke, and who subsequently became chief racing reporter of the *Sporting Life*, there was held in Sheffield a mighty match, in which a big monkey was backed to break a noted terrier's rat-killing record of one hundred inside four minutes. The dog was what the initiated in such matters call 'the bitch's choice,' a bit of canine lore that may or may not prove useful to those who go dog-buying without an overburdening knowledge of their subject. It is simply to let the mother choose a pup for you. Take her litter away from her—take the young dogs into the next room—and then allow her to fetch them. As an unvarying rule she will certainly bring back the best pup first.

At this distance of time I utterly forget what was the dog's fighting name, but, as soon as the sewers men who supplied the rats had counted out five score of the squealing animals into the pit, the dog was dropped in. He did not, as a novice might have done, dash frantically into the heap, and so scatter the rats in all directions; but, taking his stand at what he considered a convenient distance, he took the top rats first, and, with masterly rapidity, broke their backs and then slung them aside. There were some that he treated too lightly. The seventh just struggled to its feet, and the sixteenth contrived to

crawl back into the heap again, but, in each case, it was but a brief respite. Remonstrated with, not in anger, but assumed surprise, by his owner—reminded that "thee's no' killin', laad, thee's no' killin'"—the brilliant terrier switched round and snapped the wounded vermin so viciously that they troubled him no further. And when it came to picking up the very last rat, which still, like the ninety and nine that had been accounted for, scratched vainly at the boards in the corner, and the man with the stop-watch bellowed out triumphantly, "With seven seconds to spare!" the rafters simply rang again with the shouts of the delighted working cutlers.

Then they brought the monkey in—the sad-faced, bare-based, flea-ranchy old monk. He was only a very ordinary sort of monkey, even as monkeys go; but he had his full share of the gift which was bestowed on all his tribe at the Creation—the power to squeeze fun out of any mortal thing; and the way in which he wound one of his long, prehensile arms round the neck of the pot-boy who had charge of him, and then proceeded to take stock of the company—the men, the dogs, and even the stains on the ceiling—the while he busily agitated himself in the region of the false ribs with a view to scare out and dislodge the *pulex* that really wasn't there, got him a hearty laugh on his first entrance. And to any sort of actor so much depends on that!

Jingo loved laughter and—strong drink. In the dram-shop, which was his Sheffield home, he observed the fact that the two things usually went hand-in-hand. He might have been above drinking with his master's regular customers if he had been able to pay for himself; as he wasn't, he sank his self-respect in obedience

to his mighty thirst. As a general thing he was in a maudlin state of fuddlement by seven in the evening and comfortably intoxicated by nine, when the great monkey principle of hugging something would assert itself, and, with his long arms clasped round the neck of a singularly silky and gentle black cat, he would sleep off his debauch in front of the fire in the bar parlour.

On this particular occasion he was in the very best humour in the world, and clearly had no notion of the programme that had been mapped out for him. A small, flat, iron-headed hammer, weighing probably fourteen or fifteen ounces, was placed in his right paw, and, with true simian anxiety to oblige, he promptly began to pound the table, but without so much as looking at what he was doing, for his head was invariably turned the other way, and his eyes were never still.

"Aah ye ready?" presently asked the licensed victualler (who had taken over from the pot-boy the stage-management of the monkey) of the two men who had been busily dropping the second hundred of rats into the pit, and, being answered in the affirmative, he carefully deposited Jingo on the boards and roared, "Then, tyam!"—which was as near as his mother tongue could get to the appellation of the great destroyer.

In this instance the holder of the watch commenced counting off the flying seconds aloud, for, contrary to the expectations and the hopes of all, the monk made no attempt to begin, but, shifting his little hammer into his left paw, recommenced irritating his epidermis with the claws of his right fist in a manner that would have won the sympathy of the

parliamentary promoter of the Verminous Persons' Bill.

The anxiety depicted on the publican's face was truly comical to behold. He durst not lay a hand on Jingo nor touch a single rat, but he swore at the monkey freely, and the monk retaliated in cordial but vehement dumbshow with every bitter curse that was known to the forest. The angry little ape spat from between his chattering teeth at his master, and once or twice menaced him with the hammer, but—well, the rats might have gone tobogganing for all that he cared!

"Thirty seconds gone!" bellowed the timekeeper, and, as though disturbed by the thundrous voice, one of the grey-whiskered rodents left the mob and ran into the centre of the pit. Jingo saw it, but he only went on tchk-tchking with his tongue against his palate, as a coachman does, and presently the rat drew a little nearer.

O, imprudent, injudicious, long-tailed alien from old Asia! On your silky head be your own blood and that of your companions in misfortune. For, unwilling to let well alone, the meddlesome little rodent advanced, and, with gratuitous viciousness, bit the inoffensive monkey on the posterior of his person.

How the whole aspect of things changed with that bite! As the monkey felt the rat's incisors, he let off one shrill screech that reverberated in the gas-globes, and his instantaneous and irascible glance at his squealing foes seemed to say, "*You* commenced it; now then, stand by! Fun is fun, but when it comes to horseplay, I'm a leader!" And then he fell to work with the velocity of a milk-separator. Beginning with the rat that had bitten him, he snatched them up

one by one and smashed them with the hammer, just as an already overworked postmaster whose office had been stormed on a Christmas Eve by an army of tourists with the post-card craze might set himself to stamp an impossible avalanche of cards before the overdue mail-train got in, using equal parts of ink, elbow-grease, and profanity. Bang!—bang! Bang!—bang! went the monkey's hammer. Two stamps apiece they got, and right between the eyes! Nor did he throw their bodies carelessly aside: as each rat got his medicine he was piled upon his deceased friends in a tidy heap, all with their tails one way. Some of them splashed a bit, but Jingo never stopped for a little thing like that. Unheeding the shrieks of laughter that arose on all sides, he was banging away like an extra hand at the G.P.O., and, in one hundred seconds that only seemed like ten, he had killed his rats, piled their corpses in a square stack, thrown down his hammer, and was endeavouring to examine the spot where he had sustained the puncture.

"Won in a walk by seventy-six seconds!" shouted the timekeeper; and the pot-boy, reappearing, carried the monkey back to his dressing-room.

. . . . . .

But, witched by this winsome monk, I have lingered in Sheffield long after I should have been at Piccadilly Circus, demonstrating (as my parting effort) how sheer, unexpected luck may sometimes override the calculations of the sharpest.

Over all Piccadilly Circus, or, to be precise, the amusing heroes who habitually gather in its bars, the gloom of Christmas Eve had settled. The only

faro joint still unknown to the police was closed for 'the holidays,' and there wasn't such a thing as a roulette table at work within fifty miles. Everybody seemed to be bent on going home early, laden with plump poultry in mat baskets. To the unspeakable detriment of every public and private interest, every branch of sport that a man could bet on had been shovelled aside to make room for this idiotic church festival, every sign and token of which was as infallible a symptom of intellectual backwardness as is the picture-writing of the gipsies on walls and doorposts, or the Chinese preparations for immediate death after accidentally gazing on a wet cat. Even that jovial and resourceful individual, the Punching Machine, who had purchased an afternoon newspaper in the faint hope of unearthing even a coddam competition, was stared in the face by nothing but death and dearth.

"Was there ever such a lot of —— gulls as the British public!" he cried, angrily. "Half a million o' money for a famine in Chitral—*Chitral*, lordlummy, there *ain't* no such place, an' even if there was, with live guys in it, perishmy, you could buy 'em and ship 'em at a shillin' a dozen! Another twenty thousand for a plague in Katmandoo, in Burmah—Katmandoo, mark you, which was on'y invented by Harmsworth's to sell the *Daily Mail*! Oh, it makes me ache; but—strikemelucky, if you want to see a *real* famine come to the Haymarket: there hasn't been a quid changed there for three weeks!"

To Piccadilly Circus, Christmas Eve meant the arbitrary suspension of all profitable hostilities until after Boxing Day.

"By which time," as Black Harry, who, from his

physiognomical unloveliness was also called 'The Man Behind the Face,' by the familiar jocose, observed lugubriously, "my digestive apparatus will probably have come to the conclusion that my throat has been cut!"

But Black Harry—a hearty, soldierly man, who, despite his somewhat forbidding nickname, had never done anything less reasonable than demolish a sea-side circulating library, the proprietor of which had lumbered him on to a novel with the promising title of *The Wide, Wide World*, whereas, as Henry explained to the constable who dragged him out of the ruins and conveyed him to the lock-up, "*Wide*, by thunder! Why, there wasn't a single thing in the whole dam book that a schoolgirl didn't know!"—was not quite so despondent as his words implied. Nor was his greatest chum, Joe Scott. Each had the inherent greatness of character which rises superior to reverses, and, what was of even greater importance, each had the nucleus of a small bank left.

"Harry," said Joe, "we must fall back on the Hat Stakes, the finish to take place in the American Bar, at seven sharp."

"The Hat Stakes it is, Joe," instantly assented Black Harry; and the compact was as firmly made as any under a scarlet seal.

To the uncontaminated, the Hat Stakes may need some introduction. It is playable with any sort of memorandum book, capital (if possible), a knowledge of the art of betting, and—punters. He who makes the book lays the odds against any particular variety of headgear passing, or arriving at, a fixed point at a given time. To persons possessing brains as well as eyes and ears, the possibilities of the game are very

great, governed, as they mainly are, by the most widely divergent conditions of locality, time of the day, and state of the weather. The goal may be anything from a street corner to a prominent pillar-box, but the door of a private bar in which the bettors are congregated is best; and Joe Scott and Black Harry were characteristically wise in fixing the finish at the American Bar, with the tick of 7 for the home plate.

News of the newly-promoted stake was flashed round the circus with that wireless rapidity which conveys to the townspeople of Newmarket the name of every big winner as it passes the Rowley Mile stand, or long before any news from the Heath could possibly reach them. Probably even the mannikin above the drinking-fountain might have swallowed a communicative air wave, but for his being of bronze.

Punters accosted Scott and his partner at every street corner: punters, when the first rush was over, were unearthed in the buffets of the Haymarket and Piccadilly, and were even run to ground in the more distant resorts of Rupert and of Glasshouse Streets. Nor, with so promising an event to bet on, could all London have produced a finer fielder than Joe Scott. Burdened but lightly by responsibility or restraint of any sort, he had a flow of words that was unceasing and a mother wit that was irresistible: it would have been like finding money to have backed him to speak for an hour without making a statement. As fresh 'probable starters' occurred to him, he seemed to find backers for them; and though naturally over such a 'course' on a Christmas Eve the long-sleeved silk topper was always a firm favourite, there seemed to be

unlimited backing for quite half-a-dozen others—indeed, the rapacious bookie was soon limiting his offers to five to one, bar seven, and three to one, bar four!

Nor did good money brought in by men who hastily took four's on the strength of having seen three intoxicated troopers of irregular horse trying to line up for the early door of the London Pavilion shake the position of the favourite, though the citizen-soldiers were morally certain to be refused admission, and almost as certain to seek alcoholic solace across the road afterwards; nor did the sudden buckling up of a benzine buggy on the sandbox and the spilling of two idiots in leather headgear induce any longer odds than ten's, bar nine of 'em. By half-past six Joe Scott must have been at least three times round on his book, and probably more than that. But Joseph knew his business to the limit, he was "standing right to his technique all the time," as the old writers used to say, and no sweeter sight is there than that of the man who has got his profession or handicraft nailed down on all four sides of him and bolted or clamped underneath in the middle. As soon, therefore, as the wildcat wagering began, Joe Scott made the sudden discovery that it wanted but five minutes to the hour of seven; and on his entering the Bar and declining further transactions, I borrowed the book and extracted the following, which club-settlers may safely accept as the closing prices :—

S. P. ON THE HAT STAKES.

11 to 10 against a silk topper (taken freely).
6 to 4 „ a black bowler (taken and offered).
9 to 4 „ a Gibus, or opera hat (taken).
25 to 10 „ a brown or drab bowler (taken twice).

3 to 1 against a Homburg, or 'Trilby,' any colour (taken).
7 to 2 „ a white felt with black band (taken).
4 to 1 „ Imperial Yeomanry sombreros, with either buttons or feathers (taken).
5 to 1 „ check tweed caps (taken and offered).
15 to 2 „ a strawyard of any sort (taken).
10 to 1 „ leather motors (taken feverishly), and
100 to 3 „ each, white beavers, khaki bowlers, or pith helmets (offered).

And now, though the call for drinks was constant and peremptory enough to keep both barkeepers steadily on the go, all eyes wandered towards the familiar clock perched over the door that leads to the lavatory. Outwardly undisturbed, Joe Scott took his seat upon the corner of one of the small square black tables and declined alike to wager or to drink. Only half a minute to seven!

As the laggard hands of the clock crawled over the last thirty seconds of the ground, one might have heard Egyptian Unifieds drop. And, truly, what a striking exemplification it was of the splendid earnestness and admirable consistency of the born gambler—the fellow who would rather bet than eat: the hero who had trained himself to share anybody's opinion for the sake of gain—to watch those thirty or forty able-bodied disciples of the strenuous life all strained to the highest tension by the seemingly trivial and unimportant point of what fashion of head-covering the next comer might affect!

But, by this, the time was up. The shadow of the old clock's longer hand passed dead over the Roman numerals 'XII' with an almost inaudible click, and Joe Scott cried, as his eyes shot from the dial to the door:

"They're off!"

"Yes," grunted Black Harry, "and here's a brandy sour been waitin' for you for the last five minutes."

Scott extended his hand for the drink, but never turned his head. In a few seconds more somebody gasped with bated breath, "They're coming!" and every eye turned towards the swinging doors as the sound of approaching footsteps was heard. Nearer, and nearer, and nearer came the feet, until at last their owner's shadow fell for a fitful instant on the ground-glass panels. The swing doors belched open, and——

In walked a copper-coloured Hindoo, his forehead surmounted by a white muslin turban, and bearing on high in his right hand a glistening silver *entrée* dish! And as he walked diagonally across the room he cried:

"Curry to-night, gentlemans! Of Malay, of Madras! Curry to-night, gentlemans!"

"A skinner!—great-balls-of-fire! a skinner!" shouted the well-nigh frantic Joe Scott, dropping the brandy sour with a crash and rushing forward and embracing the astonished Hindoo cook. "Turban's, won in a (——) walk! Formerly ran as the Calico Cadi colt! Twenty-eight and a half quid on the book, and I never laid a shilling against it!"

Aye, and there was no Black List in *that* day, either!

FINIS CHARTAEQUE VIAEQUE.

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